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## **Abstract**

Volunteer tourism has rapidly emerged as a pervasive form of contemporary global tourism. This paper examines the importance of incorporating non-representational theories into analyses of volunteer tourism. Discussions of volunteer tourism are often framed within fixed notions of culture, identity and power relations. In this paper I argue that attention to embodiment, affect and emotion can provide more nuanced insights into the ambiguities of volunteer experiences and encounters. Drawing on fieldwork from a small coastal town in Peru, the study focuses on the encounters

between volunteers and locals and the role of emotions in the framing of their experiences. While emotions and expectations are often framed by development aid discourses that characterise volunteers and locals into neo-colonial binaries, there are also numerous possibilities for how volunteers and locals are 'affected'.

By attending to the 'more than rational' dimensions of the volunteer tourism experience I draw out the relationship between embodiment, affect and what philosopher of hope Bloch (1986) calls the 'ontology of the-not-yet'. It is within the embodied encounters in spaces of 'the-not-yet-become' where hopeful possibilities in volunteer tourism are found'. This opens up new ways of understanding volunteer tourism. This may, in turn, facilitate more responsible and equitable practice in volunteer tourism projects.

**Keywords:** Volunteer tourism; nonrepresentational theory; affect; emotion; development aid; neoliberalism; hope; 'the not yet- become

## **1.1 Introduction**

...as long as the reality has not become a completely determined one, as long as it possesses still unclosed possibilities the shape of new shoots and new spaces of development, then no absolute objection to utopia can be raised by merely factual reality. (Bloch 1986, p. 197)

The above quote by philosopher of hope Ernest Bloch illustrates the importance of being open to the possibilities of the future. When the future is framed and foreclosed by pre-determined outcomes there is no room for 'new shoots' or 'new spaces of development'. For a future to remain open to possibilities then, it is also vital to be open to the possibilities in the present. Yet much of the literature on volunteer tourism to date is limited in its approach by tending to focus on whether the experience is positive or negative based on normative frameworks of how much tourists are 'helping' local communities (Lyons et al 2012; Lyons and Wearing 2008; Mostafanezhad, 2013a, 2013b; Mustonen 2005; Simpson 2004; Sin 2010a; Singh & Singh 2004; Vodopivec and Jaffe 2011).

Framing volunteer tourism within this helping model tends to reinforce binary ways of understanding volunteer tourism and in doing so renders tourist subjects and their experiences as fixed and static. This limitation of volunteer tourism research is recognised by Sin, Oakes, and Mostafanezhad (2015), who argue that scholarship on volunteer tourism needs to move beyond binary normative frameworks to draw out more fully the complexities around practices, outcomes and effects in the volunteer tourism experience. While some authors (see Conran 2011; Crossley 2012; Mostafanezhad 2013a, 2013b, 2014a; Vrasti 2013) have drawn attention to the more nuanced aspects of the experience by drawing on emotional and affective aspects of volunteer tourism, these analyses have foregrounded the role that structural power regimes such as neoliberalism play in shaping the emotional encounters in volunteer tourism. This kind of deterministic thinking by the critical literature in volunteer tourism risks reifying neoliberalism by setting up predetermined a priori outcomes (Pow 2015) and plays into what Woodyer and Geoghegan (2012) refer to as the 'disillusionment narrative' that is so dominant in critical geography. While acknowledging the importance of these critiques from the volunteer tourism literature, I add to the emerging literature on volunteer tourism that uses non-representational theory, 'affect' and 'emotion' to destabilise these binary normative ways of thinking about volunteer experience (see Frazer & Waitt 2016; Griffiths 2014). In this paper, I argue that the ambiguity of emotional connections and embodied encounters with local people opens up spaces for hopeful possibilities. This is because embodied encounters cannot be predetermined within a specific outcomes based model, nor are all these

encounters hopelessly subsumed within 'capit-o-lcentric' discourses (Gibson-Graham 2006a, 2006b, 2006c).

Scholars in both geography (Anderson 2006; Cameron and Hicks 2014; Dinerstein and Deneulin 2012; Woodyer and Geoghegan 2012) and tourism studies (Ateljevic et al. 2007; Brosnan, Filep, and Rock 2015) are calling for 'an ethos of hope' in order to seek out openings and possibilities, as part of a performative research agenda seeking to affect social change. For Ateljevic et al. (2007, p. 3) hopeful tourism is "a commitment to tourism enquiry which is pro social justice and equality and anti-oppression" and about doing research that challenges destructive dichotomies. They argue that research must be conducted in a way that enhances social justice agendas rather than simply reify historical power and social relations. Performing research with these hopeful goals in mind, rather than being trapped within a model of fixed outcomes, means (re) discovering the power of individual agency and our own 'processes of becoming' (Ateljevic et al., 2007, p. 5).

While performing a hopeful tourism agenda I do not wish to undermine the importance of critical theory. The much cited critique of hopeful tourism by Higgins-Desiollles, and Whyte (2013, p. 429) contains valid points around the importance of deconstructing power and privilege so that an 'emancipatory praxis can be co-developed with communities and peoples suffering oppression'. Indeed, this article discusses the problematic links between volunteer tourism and development aid, particularly in the context of short term volunteering. The intent of my argument however, is to draw attention to the complexities and ambiguities that happen on the ground in volunteer tourism. It is within these ambiguous tensions that 'crafting imaginative and alternative futures' (Brosnan et al., 2015, p. 96) for volunteer tourism are found. These alternative futures are possible through Bloch's (1986) notion of 'the-not-yet-become', the present is not predetermined.

Higgins-Desiollles and Whyte (2013, p. 429) argue that hopeful scholars need to be wary of how we hope and suggest that hopefulness itself "can be rife with insensitivity, ignorance and serious deficits in moral imagination". It is pertinent then, to be clear in the way that hope is utilised in this paper. I turn to Bloch's conception of 'educated hope' (Levitas 1990). This is a hope that goes beyond the changed circumstances of individuals towards a hope that simultaneously anticipates and affects the future (Levitas 1990). Affecting the future is

about thinking of reality not only in terms of what it is but also what is becoming or might become (Levitas 1990). This is what Bloch terms 'the not- yet-become'. For Bloch, hope is an anticipatory consciousness and 'knowledge is to be gained on the basis of an ontology of 'the-not-yet' (Bloch 1986, p.13). It is my intention then, to shed light on the ambiguities of volunteer tourism in order to keep the discussion open to possibilities of what could be. Drawing on fieldwork from a small scale Non-Government Organisation in tourist town Huanchaco, on the coast of Peru, I conceptualise volunteer tourism spaces as 'spaces of the-not-yet-become', that is, they contain possibilities because they are not fixed spaces and do not have fixed futures. Hope is found in a future that is not pre-determined. The purpose of presenting this case study in such a way is to performatively illustrate the importance of process, relationality and hopefulness in the embodied encounters in volunteer tourism. By delving into some of the intercultural encounters between volunteers and locals in these spaces of 'the-not-yet' I argue that neither tourist subjects, nor outcomes in volunteer tourism, can be pre-determined according to prescriptive normative models. To illustrate this argument, I examine the affective registers of the volunteers' experiences at one of the volunteer project sites - the skate ramp park. The recounting of these experiences by volunteers highlights the non-fixedness and intersubjective nature of these encounters, where spaces for new possibilities and hope come into being. Hope is an 'ethics of joy' which comes from the appreciation of positive change (Zournazi and Hage 2002) and possibilities in the 'not-yet' (Bloch 1986). By drawing attention to the 'more-than-rational' (Wright 2012), different ways of understanding volunteer tourism emerge that shed light on the importance of process, relationality, affect and emotions. Spaces of 'the-not-yet' emerge through affective moments and embodied encounters.

## **1.2 The affective pull of the 'helping' narrative in volunteer tourism**

Considering the heavy emphasis on emotions in tourism marketing (Robinson 2012), it is not surprising that increasing attention is being given by tourist scholars to the role of affect and emotions in tourism. Emotions are individual but also collectively framed especially in the way the experience is articulated and communicated to others. The experience of emotions relates to wider normative frameworks and to an extent discipline how certain emotions should be felt and how these feelings should be expressed (Picard 2012). In Volunteer

tourism, marketing incites motivations to not just travel, but also 'give back' (Lyons and Wearing 2008; McGehee and Santos 2005; Mustonen 2005; Tomazos and Butler 2010). It is this affective language of helping, used to draw in volunteers, that has been the focus of criticism for some volunteer tourism academics (see Conran 2011; Crossley 2012a, 2012b; Mostafanezhad 2013a, 2013b; 2014a; Simpson 2004; Sin 2010b; Vrasti 2013). These critics argue that this language of helping reinforces binaries where minority world actors are contrasted as privileged carers who are active and generous while majority world actors are grateful and passive. Binaries are reinforced and naturalised through this 'geography of need' (Simpson 2004). Poverty becomes the marker of difference. Poverty happens 'over there', to 'them', not to 'us' ironically working to obstruct empathy (Crossely, 2012). Crossley (2012b, p. 95) argues that affects have a dual potential, "to bring about self change through emotional encounters and to lessen the effects of these changes through defence against unconscious anxieties". For example, she found that volunteer tourists in Kenya made sense of their encounters with poverty as an "unpleasant yet necessary experience that one must go through in order to trigger emotions such as sadness and guilt, which in turn facilitate the positive change in the self" (Crossely, 2012b, p. 94). These critiques demonstrate that emotions experienced by volunteer tourists do not always have positive transformative effects.

Emotions can work to buffer volunteer tourists from the broader structural causes of poverty and inequality. For Mostafanezhad (2013a), the uncritical engagement with global power dynamics and historical circumstances leads many volunteer tourists to articulate causes of poverty as authentic and cultural thus psychologically buffering volunteers from the inequitable realities of poverty. For Conran (2011), the role of intimacy as mediating the volunteer experience overshadows issues of structural inequality. Structural inequality becomes reframed as individual morality - which then becomes commodified by the processes of neo-liberalism. This can be seen as a kind of 'affective inequality' where emotions and affect are manipulated to marginalise certain narratives and reproduce power relations (Modlin, Alderman, and Gentry 2011). It is certainly problematic then that the uncritical affective pull of this 'helping' narrative is so powerful in mediating motivations and experiences in volunteer tourism.

These critiques are important in drawing attention to the powerful role emotions play, particularly in the marketing of volunteer tourism, where problematic binaries of 'the other' and simplistic notions of poverty are reinforced. Yet as Coleman and Crang (2002) argue, tourist encounters are complicated and do not merely slot into fixed hegemonic tourist systems. Some tourism geographers warn against the temptation of seeing tourist spaces as already 'inscribed', rendering tourism places and subjects as 'objects' with no room for agency (Coleman and Crang 2002; Crouch 2002; Crouch and Desforges 2003). Crouch (2002) argues that too often tourism academics have imagined and described processes of tourism as happening within already existing and fixed hegemonic systems. In the case of volunteer tourism, these critiques have also tended to lean on existing inscriptions of an exploitative system of power relations between the majority and minority worlds. Arguably, these critiques of the neo-colonial and neo-liberal aspects of volunteer tourism are necessary to bring attention to the problematic aspects of the industry. However the outcomes tend to become fixed within this model, leaving little possibility for dynamism and other alternative readings of these spaces. As Griffiths (2015a, 628) argues, framing emotions in volunteer tourism as entirely subordinate to these macro regimes of power "draws fixed lines between macro and micro" and is "a narrow and therefore limiting conceptualisation of the embodied experience". Rather than foregrounding and thus reifying these macro structural analyses of volunteer tourism then, this paper is concerned with the nuances and ambiguities of the embodied volunteer tourism experience.

Encounters in volunteer tourism are complicated and outcomes are not simply prescriptive according to hegemonic power systems. For Palacios (2010), volunteering cannot be simply understood within an institutional framework. It is the emotional connections and the close cultural contact made between locals and volunteers that make projects successful in the minds of volunteers and locals. Yet it is also the language of 'helping' that draws people in and influences the way in which these emotional connections are made. For this reason, Griffiths (2014, p. 13) argues that academics need to find ways to understand the rich intersubjective encounters in volunteer tourism without limiting these encounters to neo-liberal frameworks. To do this, researchers also need 'to be open to the possibilities presented by the affective moments in the field' (Griffiths 2014, p. 13). For Griffiths (2014),

affective methodologies are an important tool for research that is socially engaged, widening the scope of how different political realities are understood.

### **1.3 Envisioning hope through non-representational theory**

Thrift (2008) argues that the world is made up of multiple entities brought into relation with one another through encounters. He sees space as a variety of assemblages, both human and non-human that produce new senses of space. By questioning what is in the world a whole new frontier of human endeavour and possibility is exposed (Thrift, 2008). Non-representational theory, particularly the use of affect and attention to emotions is being increasingly utilised in tourism analysis to highlight the fluidity of tourism subjects and experiences and to problematise dualistic, binary and static ways of thinking about tourist interactions (see, for example, Girman 2012; Picard 2012; Pons-Pau Obrador 2003; Pritchard, Morgan, Ateljevic 2011; Robinson 2012; Tucker 2009). The world of the tourist is not prefigured - but “figured and refigured in the process of being a tourist” (Crouch, Aronsson and Wahlstrom 2001, p. 262). Tourism spaces involve people and places in process (Coleman and Crang 2002). Attention to embodied encounters ‘in process’ can complicate fixed notions of culture, identity and power relations.

Attention to process in volunteer tourism involves thinking outside totalitising fixed macro power regimes. This can shift awareness to human practices which “lie beyond the conscious and the structured” (Crouch and Desforges 2003, p. 9). As Girman (2012) argues, emotions, mood and affect work to foreground messy encounters and can work to break away from linear narratives. Attention to affect and emotions does not negate the way that power works at a structural level. However, attention to ambiguity through the messy lens of affect, demonstrates that meaning cannot always be precoded into dominant representational structures (Girman 2012) and the fixation on rationality as part of this precoding (see Wright 2012). Likewise volunteers and locals cannot be precoded into homogenous fixed groups with fixed experiences. The embodied experiences of encounters between volunteers and locals are always in process, and these processes contain endless possibilities.

Reimagining interactions and power as fluid and non-fixed, involves a move away from seeing volunteer tourism as positive or negative dependent on a predetermined set of normative outcomes. Through these reimaginings, there is room to see interactions as fluid and envisage the potentialities that arise through relational experiences. For Crouch (2002), tourist subjectivities come about through practical involvement; embodied encounters can transform spaces. Expectations and experiences are constantly negotiated and renegotiated depending on those involved in the interactions. Moods and emotions add layers of complexity to academic discourse. Attention to affect can allow different stories to be heard. For Wright (2012, p. 1113), considering the importance of emotions and all that is “beyond-the-rational” is crucial for moving “beyond development’s modernist roots towards more postcolonial understandings’ of the world”.

## **1.4 A language of becoming in ‘the-not-yet’; hopeful possibilities of being-in-the-world**

Bloch's (1986) 'ontology of not-yet being' and 'not-yet-become' envisages experimental potentialities in the 'unfinishedness' of the world. For Bloch (1986), immaterial capacities of the imagination, intuition and daydreaming are crucial in the actualisation of hope. Something better is 'not-yet', is lived in the here and now, and happens at multiple scales (Anderson 2006).

For Bloch there are three dimensions of human temporality. A better future is that which is directed by a "dialectical analysis of the past which illuminates the present" (Kellner 1999, p. 40). The past contains suffering and failures and can direct humanity towards what 'could have been and can yet be' (Kellner 1999, p. 40). History is a "repository of possibilities that are living options for future action" (Kellner 1999, p. 40). Hope is about dreaming forward in light of 'what is, what has been, and what could be'. It is only by engaging in creative practice that we can produce a more equitable world (Kellner 1999, p. 40). Lack of hope then, for Bloch (Miyazaki 2004), is a methodological issue due to temporal incongruity. Contemplative knowledge is retrospective. Contemplative knowledge can only refer by definition to "what has become", in other words, a closed world that has already become (Miyazaki 2004, p. 13). The utopian function of hope therefore, "alters the given past-present-future temporalities by articulating the possibility of anticipating the future within the present. Through hope, the future is already in the present" (Dinerstein and Deneulin, 2012, pp. 394-395). Hope invokes the limitation of the retrospective construction of knowledge and serves as a method for philosophy that is open to the future (Kellner 1999). As Bloch (1986, p. 18) states "Essential being is not Been-ness; on the contrary: the essential being of the world lies itself on the Front."

For Bloch (1986 p. 6), "the-not-yet-conscious" and "the-not-yet-become" needs to be taken seriously as philosophy and politics - the silence on these concepts demonstrates an "overwhelming static thinking" which repeatedly 'closes something off as finished...' A closed world is one that has already become and thus cannot be changed for the better:

As complete knowledge it is by definition solely knowledge of what can be contemplated, namely of the past, and it bends an arch of closed form-contents out of Becomeness over the Unbecome. (Bloch 1986, p. 6)

Hope then is a process based on openness to multiple possibilities. Adding to Bloch's philosophy of hope I include an embodied dimension to hope because hope is not just a concept or a position but also an emotion, embodied in interactions and relationships. Hope is "'dynamic and embodied' and 'drawn from the appreciation of a capacity to act and relate to others' (Wright 2008, p. 224). For Woodyer and Geoghegan (2012), the in-betweenness of encounters and attention to the more-than-rational in terms of love, care and attachment can move us towards establishing emotional and ethical contexts for our relationships. Hope is embodied within encounters and relationships.

Through my case study of the skate ramp, I argue that embodied interrelationships keep tourist spaces fluid. Mapping and highlighting these encounters can help to cultivate better worlds through reflexive engagement by academics and in turn tourists and tourist organisations. I have suggested elsewhere (Everingham 2015), that highlighting the benefits and potentialities in volunteer tourism, such as intercultural learning and mutuality, can add to a cultivation of a less paternalistic configuration of volunteer tourism. Seeing tourist subjects as fluid opens up various possibilities for how interactions and outcomes in tourism play out. In order to map some of these hopeful transformative encounters in volunteer tourism, I draw on the idea that possibilities for the future are found in the present itself (Motta 2013). It is within the processes, the spaces of 'the-not-yet', and human inter-subjectivities, that hopeful possibilities can emerge. It is only through attention to process through the actual embodied encounters that the new can be brought into being. I am interested in how embodied encounters can frame the analysis of volunteer tourism away from "essential forms, pre-determined subjects, structured functions or transcendent values" (Motta 2013, p. 83) towards becomings with possibilities of multiple outcomes. My intention is to contribute to debates in tourism that have called for a rethinking of the tourist subject and the body (see Arun 2010; Coleman and Crang 2002; Crouch 2002; Crouch and Desforges 2003; Pritchard et al. 2011; Robinson 2012) and to make explicit the connections between embodiment and hope. Notions of embodiment and subjectivity can highlight the unexpected that comes about through processes of "dynamic dwelling' and 'becoming" (Crouch and Desforges 2003, p. 7).

The following case study maps out various encounters that happened in a skate ramp, set up in a small community just outside Huanchaco on the North coast of Peru. It

demonstrates the power of development aid discourses in mediating how encounters are framed but most importantly, it also highlights the ambiguities and affective registers that constitute how experiences play out and are recounted. Development aid discourses are somewhat powerful in inscribing how projects play out; for example through their framing of outcomes by the volunteers. However the encounters that take place, the interactions between volunteers and locals contain multiple possibilities.

## **1.5 Case study**

Otra Cosa Network is a registered Not for Profit, Non-Government Organisation and United Kingdom charity based in Huanchaco Trujillo- a small seaside village on the North Coast of Peru. The organisation sets volunteers up with existing community led organisations. There are over twenty local partner projects as diverse as teaching, social work, working in an animal shelter and helping out in locally run day care programmes. Otra Cosa Network runs five of their own projects in the community under the umbrella of Huanchaco Education and Learning (HELP). The HELP projects include empowerment programmes for local women, English classes in various surrounding communities, a literacy club for local children, environmental education programmes and a skate ramp project, where children from a local community can gather to spend a few hours in the afternoon after school. On arrival at Otra Cosa Network, volunteers select the projects they are interested in and the organisation does its best to match the suitability of the volunteers with their chosen projects. Its aims are to provide volunteers with stimulating, rewarding projects with the expectation that volunteers will also use their own initiatives and time management skills. The ultimate aim of the organisation is embedded within a development aid 'helping' discourse: 'to help improve the quality of people's lives in the local area' (otracosa 2016).

The focus of Otra Cosa Network is to provide volunteer experiences that are inexpensive yet sustainable (otracosa 2016). At the time, this research was conducted in 2012-2013; the fee was around \$200 for between 1 and 6 months, which went directly to the administration costs. The organisation makes a point of differentiating itself from other organisations that charge large amounts of money and emphasises the transparency of where the money goes. Volunteers pay extra for accommodation - either in the volunteer house, local hostels or

homestays. They also pay extra for food, excursions and Spanish lessons. Level of Spanish, age and duration of stay vary depending on the project.

## **1.6 Methodology**

The research took place twice within two years. The following case study is part of my PhD fieldwork on volunteer tourism. The fieldwork involved a participant autoethnography of two low cost volunteer organisations in Peru and Ecuador which attracted travellers of similar demographics. With both field trips for this particular organisation combined, a total of 28 semi-structured interviews were conducted. The first fieldtrip occurred in 2012 and involved six weeks of participant observation teaching English classes in local communities, and semi-structured interviews with volunteers and staff members. On the second fieldtrip in 2013 I did not volunteer for any of the programmes, instead I conducted a five week observation of some of the other projects. I observed a teaching English programme in a local school, a social work programme, childcare programme and the skate ramp. I also conducted more interviews with volunteers and new staff members. Participants in the study were those who were on site each time while I was there and responded to email requests for interviews. Volunteers were asked about their experiences volunteering, their interactions with the local community and the strengths and weaknesses of the projects they were involved in.

My interest in the importance of embodied encounters largely came from my own experiences and interactions with members of the local community as well as more informal discussions and interviews with other volunteers about their own experiences. While my research is limited through its focus on the volunteer's experiences and not the locals, the importance of the relationships and experiences with locals was prominent in all my interviews with the volunteers. In my second round of fieldwork in 2013 my focus was directed to exploring the more intangible and emotional aspects of the experience through the stories told by volunteers and observations of the interactions happening in other projects. For this article I focus on just one of these projects, the skate ramp. There were six volunteers involved in this project at the time of my stay. The following table provides demographic information on the six participants involved in this particular case study (Table 7.1).

**Table 7.1 Demographics of volunteers involved at the Skate Ramp.**

| Name   | Country of origin | Age | Background (job/study)                     | Time spent volunteering      |
|--------|-------------------|-----|--|------------------------------|
| Penny  | USA               | 25  | School science teacher                     | At the end of 1 month stay   |
| Riley  | USA               | 27  | School science teacher                     | At the end of 1 month stay   |
| Julie  | Australia         | 30  | Sports news reporter                       | Last day of 1 month stay     |
| Mathew | Australia         | 31  | Physical Education teacher                 | Last day of 1 month stay     |
| Andrew | England           | 27  | IT and marketing                           | At the end of a 3 month stay |
| Felix  | Denmark           | 28  | University student: International Business | At the end of a 6 month stay |

The volunteer projects varied amongst volunteers and I did not have personal experience with all of the projects. Therefore the interview questions were largely designed to extract information about the particular projects the volunteer tourists were working on; their experiences in the programmes and their experiences of intercultural communication. Questions were asked around the general demographics of the volunteers; age, educational and work backgrounds and their level of Spanish. Questions were designed to understand their motivations and expectations for volunteering, why they chose this particular project and suggestions for improvement. All of the interviews were around one hour long. Each interview varied depending on the projects the volunteers were involved in and the triggers the questions provoked. A social constructionist method (Weinberg 2008) was adopted in the interview context with attention to the relational intersubjective aspects of the interview. The interaction between the interviewee and researcher is important when recounting experiences, particularly as I was also a volunteer participant, and had social relationships with the volunteers outside the volunteer context.

The skate ramp project has been chosen as a case study for this particular article because of the way it highlighted the ambiguities and intersections of development aid, intercultural encounters and the possibilities in the not-yet. This is a performative presentation of my empirics, to present volunteer tourism in a different light which aims to 'affect' the practice of volunteer tourism by moving analysis away from being framed within a paternalistic model of development aid.

## **1.7 The skate ramp: (non) embodied encounters: (not) dwelling in place**

One of Otra Cosa's most popular projects is the skate ramp, located in a small shanty town called Ceritto de la Virgin, on the outskirts of Huanchaco. The majority of the population were relocated to this site around thirteen years ago when excessive rain left millions of Peruvians homeless. The government made no promises to the community and provided no electricity or water. From an outsider's perspective, the shanty town is dirty and dusty and according to the Otra Cosa website many of the children feel unstimulated resulting in misbehaviour. The main goal of this project is "to offer the children a safe play environment, whilst promoting sharing and respect and encouraging kids to enjoy being physically active. One of the most important aspects is providing the children with positive role models" (otracosca 2016).

During my second fieldtrip in 2013 the volunteers were finalising the installation of a tap in the skate ramp, to make fresh water accessible. At that time, tap water was only available to 20% of the community and was considered by many in the community of Ceritto de la Virgin as a luxury. The materiality of the tap was crucial in actively mediating interactions between volunteers and locals. Askins and Pain (2011) utilise non-representational theory to discuss the important role the materiality of an object plays in the social relations that form around that object. As Askins and Pain (2011, p. 813) argue, objects are 'not simply intermediaries, but rather actively mediate relations between people' Seeing research spaces as contact zones, they suggest when an activity is the contact zone, objects act as conduits that can facilitate transformative social relations in the spaces of encounter (Askins and Pain 2011). In the following sections I outline how the tap provided legitimacy to the volunteers who interpreted their experiences through the lens of development aid, the way the tap both reinforced and challenged neo-colonial stereotypes of Peruvians and lastly, how the tap worked to bring people together through their embodied encounters to create an intention towards future possibilities.

### **1.7.1 Doing development; the interface of disappointment and hope**

As Anderson (2006, p. 743) points out, inherent in the idea of "becoming hopeful" is that something good has "still not become". It is from a sense of diminishment then that

becoming hopeful emerges through a “disposition that provides a dynamic imperative to action” (Anderson 2006, p. 744). For the volunteers involved with the skate ramp project, diminishment played out as disillusionment regarding its lack of purpose when seen through the lens of development aid. There was some confusion amongst the volunteers as to how exactly the skate ramp project was to contribute to the children’s development or development aid in general. Although one volunteer, Penny, stated that the skate ramp project was ‘a cool idea-to give the kids something to do after school’, the affective pull of the helping narrative in terms of ‘doing development’ and the lack of development aid outcomes meant that she and her boyfriend Riley were disappointed with the way the skate ramp was run. Retrospective contemplation of how development aid should be performed meant that Penny and Riley were disappointed with the project. They felt Otra Cosa should be more involved with the local schools, introduce homework programmes and for Penny:

just something more than having these kids run and play and steal things without returning it and having to threaten them. It’s just very disorganised.

Penny and Riley’s experience at the skate ramp was also tainted by the lack of community consultation and tangible development outcomes. Penny thought the project was:

... a cool idea-to give the kids something to do after school. But, the way its run up there, it’s totally dependent on volunteers coming up and opening it and there’s no interaction with the community...the community doesn’t really know enough about it. There hasn’t been an outreach to the parents of the kids, no one knows who the parents are, or what they do, or where the kids go to school. It’s just a kind of a free for all babysitting. There’s no discipline for misbehaviour - as you’ve probably seen, and the only things that’s been done is to threaten to close down the ramp...which is not a good strategy for discipline, like you’re not really teaching the kids anything if you’re just threatening them all the time. Umm.. soo.. its more just like a babysitting project rather than teaching the kids life skills, and there’s so many volunteers that are in and out. I can’t imagine.. I mean that’s got to be hard on the kids who get attached to certain volunteers. And then the volunteers leave... so I think the idea’s cool, it gives them something to do, it keeps them from being bored, but it would be really nice to see more involvement with the community - maybe eventually not to even need volunteers. It could be self-sustaining, run by older siblings, or Mums who aren’t working at the time. Or, like. I don’t know - something like that.

As Picard (2012) argues, tourism marketing can work to discipline the emotions that tourists feel. The marketing of volunteer tourism around ‘helping’ has a large role to play in disciplining the emotions and articulation of experiences by volunteers. Although both

Penny and Riley regarded the skate ramp as a positive place children could go to after school to have fun and keep out of trouble, they were also sceptical of how much the skate ramp was actually contributing to 'development', particularly when development was thought about in terms of development aid. Disillusionment about the purpose of the skate ramp then was confined to this particular model of development. Putting the tap in then, was regarded by the volunteers as being a legitimate way to perform development aid in the community and gave their time at the skate ramp a sense of purpose and an openness to future possibilities for the skate ramp. It was this desire to engage in actual 'development' that Penny and Riley were so keen to get the tap into the ramp. Penny said:

that's why I think we wanted to focus on getting the actual water project done -instead of just playing with kids - and trying to organise things. Our time was more focused on the water building.

Like Penny and Riley, Julie also felt that installing the tap was an important part of 'making a difference' that her and her boyfriend Mathew could feel would make a positive contribution to the community of Ceritto de la Virgin:

We're not here to just laze around and play with the kids - we want to leave a mark

While the tap played an important role in legitimising the skate ramp as a worthwhile project through its contribution to development aid, it also played a part in perpetuating binaries between volunteers as experts and locals as lazy. For example Andrew's role as a volunteer involved working in the office on Information Technology and the marketing of the organisation. Although he was involved in some of the planning for the tap, he had no direct involvement with the community in the construction phase, nor was he there to see the tap being turned on for the first time. His view and interpretation of what was happening remained influenced by stereotypical notions of Peruvians. As Ahmed (2010, p. 41) argues, 'If we arrive at objects with an expectation of how we will be affected by them, then this affects how they affect us, even in the moment they fail to live up to our expectations'. Andrew had fixed ideas of Peruvians, and his role in the project meant that his views remained fixed. Andrew shared with me some of his observations about the Peruvian approach to getting projects done:

Peruvians tend to have a sort of Hollywood agent approach \_ by not saying no to anything but then not necessarily doing it... They are not very direct. Time management can be an issue - stuff

that was supposed to happen last week still wouldn't have happened... like -putting the water in at the skate ramp was an issue that came up over and over again. And then it was only done after... I think that project was meant to be done 8 months ago – but it's only recently been completed - so that's frustrating.

Framing the skate ramp project in terms of development aid plays into hierarchies and binaries that portrays the majority world as backward where 'intervention' is needed by minority world 'experts' (Escobar 1995) and risks homogenising people and places into a 'geography of need' (Simpson 2004). Stereotypes are reinforced through the construction of the majority world as needy while minority world young people with no skills are presented as being able to fulfil this need (Simpson 2004). When the experience is framed in a development aid model, other experiences that happen in the skate ramp can be seen by the volunteers as secondary to the higher goal of performing development aid. When hope for the future is framed within development aid and these outcomes are not met, it can lead to disappointment and neo-colonial binaries of 'us and them' become prominent.

Labelling Peruvians as backward and needy also arose in my interview with Felix, the volunteer project manager of the ramp. The local community of El Cerrito was criticised by Felix for not being grateful for the work the volunteers were doing. Apart from the children who visited the ramp, the local community largely left the volunteers alone and there was not much interaction between the adults and the volunteers. For Felix, the reason for this was because they did not value the work of the volunteers:

...so just the whole thing is that the community doesn't know we are here. I feel like we don't get the appreciation that I feel we need or deserve. Then again - I think that's also a South American thing - maybe the locals don't consider us to be volunteering our time and that we need money to come here and work for free - but that we're just people that come here to just please our own egos...The people I run into don't really express any gratitude at least not any of the families in el Cerrito - except when they get free stuff - that's pretty much it. So something tangible - when they get donations and the kids come home with new clothes or something like that - then they appreciate it. But if we just put in the time and the effort - then I don't feel that's appreciated.

Like Andrew, Felix largely worked from the Otra Cosa Network office and did not spend a lot of time in the actual community. Although he had spent some time in the community he largely worked on the logistics of organising resources and projects (such as the tap) from

afar. Interestingly, when it came time for the tap to be turned on for the first time Felix was absent. The four volunteers who had been working on the ground for the last month to install the tap, all expressed surprise and some dismay that he had not shown up for the tap's inauguration. This absence meant that Felix missed out on the positive affective embodied interpersonal interactions that were happening on the ground. He remained 'unaffected' by the hope and joy that came from being in the moment and connecting to others around the possibilities that came from the materiality of the tap's installation. For the volunteers working in the skate ramp and installing the tap, there were complex layers of intangible experiences embodied in the actual encounters. The physicality of constructing and using the tap led to outcomes that could not be precoded into an outcomes based model of development aid. The actual embodied physicality of being there at the inauguration of the tap was a moment of shared happiness for those involved. The tangible outcome of the successful instalment of the tap was a rewarding experience for the four volunteers who had worked on it the past month. They all mentioned in their interviews how happy and excited the kids were to have the tap up there and how good it was to see and be part of it. I was also present when the tap was first turned on (**Figure 7.1**) and was positively affected by the experience:



**Figure 7.1** Children playing under the tap after it was turned on for the first time.

The kids gathered around excitedly to see the first drops of water coming out of the tap. As soon as the water gushed through the kids screamed their joy and crowded around to get their hands under the tap. They began to wash and clean their faces and arms and legs, wetting their hair and splashing around. They filled up bottles and stamped the water around in the dust. It was such a spectacular sight to see such joy on the kids faces. It was also nice to know that unlike so many short-term volunteering stints, the four volunteers who worked on the ground installing the tap in the month they were here were able to see the final tangible results of their work. Although the tap would potentially lead to all sorts of new projects in the park, the kids obvious joy at flowing water was surely an outcome they could be proud of (field notes January 2013).

The process of working on the tap in the skate ramp and the embodied encounters that took place 'affected' the volunteers and locals in positive ways. Although ambiguity existed around how the skate ramp and tap fit into the ideals and outcomes of development aid, the encounters that took place around the installation of the tap brought people of various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds together. The tap also worked to mediate

moments of connection and joy. Positive affective registers were enacted through the tap's materiality. Matthew and Julie for example, felt their role in installing the tap was a tangible difference they could make in their month of volunteering. Yet they also talked about the more intangible outcomes that came about through their embodied interactions. They talked about two young boys with behavioural problems who they had found quite difficult to engage with at the beginning of their volunteering experience. Gradually as they got to know the boys better - and got involved in certain activities with the boys, a bond developed between them. The boys even took the initiative to help them dig the trenches for the tap and Mathew and Julie took delight in seeing how proud the boys felt to be participating in this very important project. Mathew said:

they're my favourite kids now. I actually like seeing them - and I'm hoping they feel the same way and I know I was that age and up to mischief not that long ago. But I think if you can just get that little bit across and try to guide them in right sort of way... it's just a little touch of influence. And I actually learn a little bit of Spanish off of them. And when we were painting the surfboards they made their way over and were like oh we might just paint today. And I was quite surprised to see them quite settled. And then all of a sudden we were digging to lay the pipe and one of them got in and started digging as well.

The mutual joy and sense of achievement experienced by those present in the process of building the tap and at the inauguration of the tap was not noted by those who were involved in the project but were absent when the tap was first turned on. However, by pointing out Felix and Andrew's absence from working on the ground I do not wish to imply that simply being involved and interacting on site leads to positive 'affects' and encounters. Articulations of these encounters on the ground are also ambiguous, complicated by embodied interactions, affective registers and the power of development aid discourses. Experiencing a child's joy can be infectious. However discourses of development are still powerful in shaping how we think about outcomes, at times obscuring the less tangible outcomes that arise from face-to-face interactions. Emotional connections can thus be hindered when development aid discourses are so powerful they lead to pre-conceived ideas of what should be happening and how things should be played out.

## 1.7.2 Possibilities in the 'not-yet' for the Skate Ramp

Positive outcomes of installing the tap not only came from the moments of connection and joy between volunteers and children but also from the hopeful possibilities of what 'could be' at the skate ramp. It is in the imaginings of how things can be better, the 'not yet' of the multiple possibilities that something like installing a tap can bring to the skate ramp in the future. For example, Penny and Riley had mused about some of the possibilities for the skate ramp now that water was available. Riley said:

...now we have water so we can build new things there ...Maybe in the future - we have ideas about building flower beds that we could grow vegetables or herbs in. We have water there so we can plant them and that could get the parents more involved too - if the kids are bringing home vegetables every now and then - they could watch over their plot... maybe get the community more involved.

These future possibilities are hopeful precisely because they remain open to a future that has yet to become. They are also dependent on the embodied encounters of those involved in the past, present and the future. Every volunteer has had, has or will have something different to offer, and relationships that have developed and will develop between volunteers and locals depend upon various aspects of embodied positionalities, for example personality, age, gender and level of Spanish. None of these relational encounters can be preinscribed before the encounters take place. As Mathew pointed out:

... as individual volunteers we will also take those experiences away with us and I guess, well other volunteers will come and get something different - and they might bring their set of skills and do something else... the intangibles are the most important bit for this particular project.

My interviews with the volunteers in this project reflect the ambiguities and contradictions that play out in volunteer tourism. For Penny and Riley playing with the children at the skate ramp project did not fit into their expectations of a pre-inscribed retrospective system of how 'help' should be practiced. This is why the tap was so important in legitimising their volunteer tourism experience. Their framework for understanding had already been shaped by the power of development aid discourses containing particular sets of outcomes. Although Penny and Riley seemed to be more aware of some of the critical development discourses, such as the importance of bottom up empowerment models, community

consultation and the sustainability of projects, at times their analysis of their experience became confined by these development discourses. Individual subjectivity is thus at times framed by dominant discourses around development which can also work to obscure the more intangible experiences and outcomes that can come from embodied interactions and encounters. Penny and Riley's translation of their experiences purely in terms of development seemed to even affect their bodily reaction to it. They did not seem to have had the positive emotional connections that Mathew and Julie experienced, and their overall reflections of their experience were largely negative.

Yet even though Mathew and Julie framed much of their experience as a kind of development aid failure, there was an interesting collision between disappointment and hope. The hope is contained in the not-yet. The potentials of what could be. This ironic intersection between disappointment and hope could instead be seen as a margin of manoeuvrability providing a basis for hopeful future action (see Cameron and Hicks 2014; Dinerstein and Deneulin 2012). Here we see the importance of Bloch's (1986) ontology of 'the-not-yet'. In this sense the 'not-yet-become' is articulated in the present through the possibilities in anticipation of a better future. Installing a tap with water has a myriad of potentialities as pointed out by Penny and Riley. These potentialities are not pre-inscribed; they will depend upon a variety of factors. For example, the embodied positionalities of who takes over volunteering next, the locals in the community and the relationality of these actors coming together. The potential of having a tap in the skate ramp has not yet been fully realised. But there is a hopefulness in imagining the possibilities of what could be. The skate ramp and the relationships that happen in the skate ramp in very specific moments are not fixed and always in process.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

Theories on affect and emotion are increasingly recognised in tourism studies as interpretative approaches that highlight the subjective aspects of tourism and how these relate to wider normative frameworks. This article seeks to build on this work as well as to illustrate how non-representational theory can be utilised for the hopeful tourism research agenda. The purpose of the study is to provide a more nuanced analysis of the role of affect and emotions in the experience, and how this can open up spaces for thinking about

hopeful possibilities. Volunteer tourism scholars (see Mostafanezhad 2013; Palacios 2010; Simpson 2004; Sin 2010a; Vodopivec and Jaffe, 2011) have rightly pointed out the problematic links between volunteer tourism, the development aid model, neo-colonialism and neoliberalism.

My research found that development aid discourses are so powerful in framing expectations in volunteer tourism that they can affect the embodied reactions of volunteers and the interpretation of their experiences. In this study, I found that the dominance of development aid discourses framed encounters in a way that sometimes closed off the positive, more intangible experiences and outcomes that can come about through the volunteer experience.

Despite the problematic links to development aid, the interactions that are happening on the ground show how the volunteer tourism experience is far from clear cut. The embodied, emotional aspects of the encounters that occur in these settings are key to understanding the ambiguities of the experience. Inscribing volunteer tourists into fixed models create 'closures' and stops movement and becoming in their 'transcendent predetermination of becoming into being' (Motta 2013, p. 86). It is the potentiality within the ambiguity where I make the link to the hopeful tourism agenda. It is precisely because of the ambiguity and messiness of the experience that spaces of hope can be found.

Non-representational theory is utilised throughout the paper to problematise how we imagine being-in the world and how outcomes cannot always be pre-determined. In the context of volunteer tourism, when outcomes are predominately based on and fixed within modernist ideals of development aid, hopeful possibilities that fall outside this model are rendered invisible. The development aid model sets up what Bloch (1986) refers to as the retrospective model of contemplation of what has already become by closing off 'the-not-yet'. The importance of 'the-not-yet' in terms of how we envision hope is to be open to the indeterminate possibilities of the future. As Anderson (2006, p. 747) argues, "becoming hopeful" is different to "becoming optimistic" because it involves an attuned ability to affect and be affected. I argue that this implies a conscious effort by academics to be more

attuned to the possibilities of hope that can be found within embodied encounters, where non-representational theory can help to make sense of the ambiguities of affect and emotion. For Anderson (2006, p. 749 italics in original), “being political *affectively*” also involves being conscious of, and building on techniques “that also aim to cultivate ‘good encounters’ and anticipate ‘something better’”. There is space for further research then, that cultivates this ‘ethos of hope’ through more attention to the nuances and ambiguities of embodied experiences, and being open to the hopeful possibilities that these encounters present.

In the context of volunteer tourism then, the hopeful agenda lies within the ambiguities, within the future that is ‘not-yet-become’. Outcomes cannot be pre-determined, and they depend upon relationality, the individual subjectivities of the volunteers, those they are relating to and even non-human materialities which, in this study, was the tap at the skate ramp. Attention to relationality can shed light on shared moments of connection and joy. Likewise there are myriads of possibilities. Yet this will depend upon whether these opportunities are followed up in the future. The possibilities lie in the ‘not-yet’. Imagination also plays a key role, imagining a better future for the skate ramp has already happened, and the installation of the tap did lead to imagining future possibilities. As Penny and Riley observed, perhaps there could be other materialities (such as flower beds, or vegetable gardens) to connect the project to the broader community. Yet these possibilities will depend upon future encounters, on the imagination and drive of future volunteers and locals in the ‘not-yet’ spaces which are always in process. Their actualisation will also depend upon friendships and relationships that are developed with the local people in the community. Taking ambiguity and messiness seriously means that academics can play a part in opening up discussion around how volunteer tourism can be practiced in a more equitable manner. That is, by moving away from development aid as the sole way we frame outcomes in volunteer tourism.

A hopeful agenda in terms of future research can shape “new shoots” and “new spaces for development” (Bloch 1986, p. 197) that take seriously the intangible affective registers and embodied relationships and connections. But of course organisations themselves are key agents in this relationality ‘in process’ and opening up of volunteer spaces for hopeful encounters. The possibilities presented by non-representational theory and attention to

affective encounters are as exciting as they are uncertain and it is precisely that ambiguity that that adds to its vibrancy.

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