



International volunteering and the changing aid and development landscape: volunteering cultures, development knowledges and South-South volunteering

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Key themes

- The coming together of dominant discourses of voluntarism and development mean we tend to focus on particular kinds of volunteers and volunteering, mobilities and temporalities.
- Volunteering needs to be increasingly understood in terms of complex comings together of different types of volunteers over time in and between places, and how these mobilise different volunteering and development knowledges
- International volunteering's relationship to development cannot be understood in isolation from an understanding of local voluntarism, and attention to both 'D' and 'd' development.
- The labels and languages we use are not stable – e.g. hosts, beneficiaries, volunteers, international volunteers – working differently over time and in different places.

Outline

Structure

- Comings together: South-South volunteering and the changing development landscape; volunteering as ‘translocal assemblage’
- ‘D’ development against voluntarism?
- Negotiating cultures and knowledges of volunteering and development
- Volunteering temporalities beyond project impacts

Research from:

- IFRC Global Review of Volunteering
- AHRC/ESRC funded research on young Christians Volunteering in Latin America
- International (including) South South and wider volunteering research in Bangladesh, China, India

‘D’ and ‘d’ developments

“ ‘big D’ Development defined as a post-second world war project of intervention in the ‘third world’ that emerged in the context of decolonization and the cold war, and ‘little d’ development of the development of capitalism as a geographically uneven, profoundly contradictory set of historical processes” (Hart, 2001, p.650)

Comings together: 'South-South' volunteering and the changing development landscape

Although we have the pre-departure training to tell them that what is NGO, how NGO works and how to adjust your expectation with NGOs, but more of them are not familiar with NGO and also when I talk to some of the volunteer about south to south volunteering programme - I mean we used to have a programme in Tanzania, south to south programme, some of them do not know what south to south [is]; from the development perspective they are a learner when they are going overseas but their skills are there, those are really strong. But if you say they really going overseas for development, that's not ...

Comings together: local, national and international volunteers

Well, depends what kind of placement is there, cos some of the placement they maybe need 5 volunteers to complete the programme, and then the volunteer will placed will volunteer with a person from a different country. But some of the placements, especially doctors, they place very individually in a rural area- so they work individually with local people (China).

- Project planning
- Popular imaginaries
- State power politics

Comings together: volunteering as 'translocal assemblage'

Ong and Collier (2005): 'An assemblage is the product of multiple determinations that are not reducible to a single logic' (p.12)

Defining assemblage:

- 1) Gathering, coherence and dispersion – linking spatiality and temporality
- 2) Groups, collectivities and distributed agencies – trajectories of crossing and engagement over time which exceeds the assemblage
- 3) Emergence rather than resultant formation (McFarlane 2009)

McFarlane: translocal assemblage

- composites of place-based social movements which exchange ideas, knowledge, practices, materials and resources across sites.
- an attempt to emphasise that translocal social movements are more than just the connections between sites.
- simply a spatial category, output or resultant formation, but signify doing, performance and events.
- agency of each member of the assemblage but also 'the groupings themselves: the milieu, or specific arrangements of things, through which forces and trajectories inhere and transform.'(p.562)

'D' development against voluntarism? impacts of international volunteers

OK, the challenge is, one, because the international volunteers, they are well packaged, these are the international, they are well packaged. And when they are working together with our volunteers who are not packaged this becomes a very big challenge because you have now the, like a different, different scenarios, because they are working on the same but we find these are well packaged, they can afford their food, their meals, their transport, their whatever, but you are local volunteer, they are not affording, they cannot afford such, you find you, they are demoralised somehow and they feel inferior anyway when you are experiencing the same volunteering principle and ...(East Africa)

'D' development against voluntarism?

- Yeah, there is a lot of external influence forces, like everybody do have several organisations that also come into the communities with the volunteers, like we do have the UN volunteers who come, we do have the VSO – Voluntary Service Overseas – who come, and we, I'd say the attention a Red Cross volunteer may be seen to have been given by the organisation and the attention which they feel is given to these other volunteers, some of the volunteers feel they don't get much attention from the Red Cross system, because the UN volunteers though they are called volunteers but we find out that they get allowances could be even so much higher than the salaries of the officers and the like so these are influences that affect our communities ... (West Africa)

'D' development against voluntarism?

Yes it's not fair, if you work on a project you can get some money, but if you are what we call community based, then you don't get anything, not even reimbursements. (West Africa)

If we have an organisation who is, that is using volunteers and for them the volunteers are being paid to do work, it becomes a very big challenge to the Red Cross that is expecting free service from volunteers who are in the community where others are being paid. And also regulations coming up with the paying volunteers, you are working with them, some counting, but for them they are also taking their volunteers are this year up, even more than the past. So like some volunteers who we think are volunteers but we are paying some money which is more than ... is earning, so that one is killing, that trend is killing the spirit of voluntarism in the communities. (Central Africa)

'D' development against voluntarism?

It is more complicated to invite women into the capital for training because we have to also pay for a man to travel with them, and they often have responsibilities at home that are hard to leave behind without extra financial support. (Middle East)

And the third aspect, the challenge is to be sufficiently attractive to capture many international volunteers. I say that there are always advantages in ... international volunteers. Firstly to know our countries, but to even have the possibility to be put in touch with another NGO, with another international organisation, but in another country, to capture funds and donations etc. etc. (West Africa)

Negotiating cultures and knowledges of volunteering and development

And I didn't have difficulty to bond with the people. Because we have similar culture like food, clothing, you know? And also an indigenous people ... [the interviewee is from an indigenous community in the Philippines] ... And our culture, our clothes are almost the same (Philippines volunteer in Bangladesh).

Well, at the moment I feel Chinese people still prefer to volunteer here in China, because travel is easy and language- they all speak Chinese and they don't need to spend a lot of money and they can come home regularly. Sometimes if they make problems someone will be there to help them. So people still prefer to volunteer in China, but they are very interested in going overseas to African countries. Especially African countries, I don't mean they don't interested in Asia area but they are more interested in Africa country (China, Stakeholder)

Negotiating cultures and knowledges of volunteering and development

And I experience I think like discrimination because they prefer her than me but it - it has affected me the first time, but now I'm getting used to it. That really these people are amused by white people that's why and they think that I am from their that's why I don't really receive much attention (Philippines volunteer in Bangladesh)

And erm, the European volunteer and the focal person said they would like to remove some members of a youth club because the requirement of the sending NGO is twenty five and the youth club has thirty five members. ... I think I said "Oh my God, that's exclusion." And recently ... knew that [the European volunteer] didn't have any experience about community organising or anything about poverty something, or whatever and I apologised for that. "I'm sorry ... I didn't know." Because she's from Germany and she's been working in a different environment while I worked with people in the grass roots (Philippines volunteer in Bangladesh)

Negotiating cultures and knowledges of volunteering and development

There's a sharing from one of our volunteers, she was working in a very rural in school. And the first time she arrived there she tried to teach the students and teachers to use the tools she created for teaching, and, she's working with another teacher- and that teacher is from UK, no Netherlands. So but in African country people wont totally listen to you. I mean, asking them coming to a meeting- no they won't. Its very normal for them to be late fro meetings. But the reaction between a Chinese volunteer and a western volunteer is a bit different. Maybe it's a special case but her case the reaction is different.

- MBS: In what way?

Yeah, the volunteer said I was not complaining, I was waiting, I observe- and that western volunteer, and maybe this is to do with culture of Netherlands and more strict and be active immediately. The reaction is different, but the outcome, our volunteer was late for a couple of weeks, and then she showed how good her tools but didn't persuade him they were good tools. So I think the process of development in 30-50 yrs. have potentially influenced people how they communicate with others. How to observe things- we used to be really really poor and not open to the outside world and ways. So people may have some potential capability to communicate with each other and also when they say keep it quiet its better- show the movement its better to do the same thing with me (China Stakeholder).

Volunteering temporalities beyond project impacts

Another thing is that what is happening to us, the same beneficiaries, the people that we support, the people that we serve, are the ones that can come, and volunteer, but yet they have to have jobs, because they need an income. So this again affects our better quality and our level of volunteerism that we attract (Latin America).

- Problems with 'pre' and 'post'
- Overlapping temporalities within and between sites
- Serial volunteering as 'career'
- Mobile and transforming knowledges over time

Volunteering temporalities beyond project impacts

A personal reflection - 1967 – 2015

- being and becoming a VSO baby

