EMBODYING HOPE: INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN THE (B)ORDERLANDS OF VOLUNTEER TOURISM

By Phoebe Everingham
Bachelor of Arts (Hons) (University of Newcastle)
A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy in Human Geography
University of Newcastle Australia

JULY 2017

THIS RESEARCH WAS SUPPORTED BY AN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAM (RTP) SCHOLARSHIP
Thesis by publication

I hereby certify that the work embodied in the thesis is my own work, conducted under normal supervision. The thesis contains no material which has been accepted, or is being examined, for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968 and any approved embargo.

Name: Phoebe Everingham

Date: July 2017
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the following people whose assistance has been so critical to the production of the thesis:

- To my wonderful and supportive supervisors Dr Paul Hodge and Dr Tamara Young for your guidance, support and faith in me. Your supervision has been invaluable and I am grateful for all that you have done. Paul – you have helped shape my PhD in extraordinary directions and given me a language for thoughts and feelings in terms of how I was ‘affected’ throughout this PhD journey. Tamara, thank you for introducing me to the world of tourism studies. I now feel I can straddle the (b)orderlands of geography and tourism thanks to you.

- Thank you also to Professor Sarah Wright who started me on this journey, allowing me to conduct my fieldwork in the early stages of the PhD to get a feel for the third space (b)orderland spaces I was so eager to investigate.

- To my family, in particular my mother Dr Christine Everingham who not only offered emotional support for this crazy PhD and motherhood journey but who also read numerous drafts of articles and chapters, and helped care for my beautiful son while I wrote it. Thankyou to my husband Jocimar Oliveira, who shared much of this PhD journey with me, even the second round of fieldwork, and shares these (b)orderland spaces with me in ‘doing life’ togther. Most of all thank you to my beautiful son Luan Everingham Oliveria, who has been a big part of this PhD journey. He came into the world because of my embodied experiences with his father in the (b)orderlands of tourism and was born right in the middle of the PhD. The second half of my PhD has been so much more productive and enjoyable with you in the world beside me. I love you to bits and I hope to explore the third space (b)orderlands of this world with you for a long time to come:
Thank you to all of the research participants who generously shared their personal stories with me. Thank you especially to Otra Cosa Network and Fundacion Arte del Mundo for allowing me to conduct fieldwork with your organisations. I hope this PhD does justice to the hopeful changes you are making in the world.

Thank you also to the people who organised conference sessions around the issues I was exploring throughout my PhD – this helped shape my research trajectory. Thank you also to the time and effort from all the anonymous reviewers for each of the published articles. Every article is so much better because of your feedback.

Thank you to Olivier Rey-Lescure for the mapping assistance, Joelle Brockman for her superior formatting skills and John Revington for the editing services.

Thank you to all the staff and students of the Discipline of Geography and Environmental Studies for their ongoing support throughout the thesis.

Thank you to my friends and family who have been so supportive during this journey, who have shared many beers and conversations with me about this thesis.


# Table of contents

## Abstract

### Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction  
1.2 Volunteer tourism as development aid  
1.3 Positioning myself in the research  
1.4 Volunteer Tourism: Thesis interventions in the (b)orderlands  
1.5 Overview of chapters

### Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction  
2.2 Volunteer tourism, neoliberalism and neo-colonial development  
2.3 Volunteer Tourism and the third space; possibilities for resistance and subversions through ambivalence and newness  
2.4 The affective turn: Informing debates in volunteer tourism  
2.5 Affect as a performativity of hope: methodology and positionality  
2.6 Affective decolonial approaches in volunteer tourism  
2.7 The hopeful tourism agenda: decolonising linear time, prefiguration and hope  
2.8 Conclusion

### Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction  
3.2 Rationale for case studies and research questions  
3.3 Timeline of fieldwork  
3.4 Organisations as ‘spaces of becoming’  
3.5 Autoethnography  
3.6 In-depth Interviews  
3.7 Case Study 1: Otra Cosa Network  
3.8 Case Study 2: Fundacion Arte Del Mundo  
3.9 Conclusion

### Chapter 4: Teaching English as voluntary tourism: intercultural communication and the ‘third space’

4.1 Introduction
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Global/Glocal English(es)</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 What is intercultural communication? What does it mean</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to have intercultural competence?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 Construction of ‘the other’ through tourism and the potential</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for the third space to overcome binaries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Volunteer tourism and the third space</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Conclusion</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5: “I’m not looking for a manufactured experience”:</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calling for a decommodified volunteer tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Literature review</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Methods</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4 Findings</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.1 Volunteer tourist/voluntourist/volunteer?</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.2 A non-commodified, ‘non-manufactured’ experience</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.3 The importance of mutuality and cross-cultural exchange</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5 Conclusion</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6: Intercultural exchange and mutuality in volunteer tourism:</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The case of intercambio in Ecuador</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1 Introduction</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2 Decentring volunteer tourism from development aid</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3 The case of Fundacion Arte del Mundo, Ecuador: reimagining</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volunteerism as mutual exchange</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4 Methodology</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5 Diversity of motivations and volunteers</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6 Framing outcomes in development aid discourse</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.7 Providing a context for mutuality: intercambio (exchange of Spanish</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and English)</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.8 Learning from children: subverting binaries and shedding</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paternalism</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.9 Conclusion</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 7: Hopeful possibilities in spaces of ‘the-not-yet become’:</td>
<td>1255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relational encounters in volunteer tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Introduction</td>
<td>1267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 The affective pull of the ‘helping’ narrative in volunteer</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tourism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.3 Envisioning hope through non-representational theory</td>
<td>1322</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 7: Embodying Hope: intercultural encounters in the (b)orderlands of volunteer tourism

7.4 A language of becoming in ‘the-not-yet’; hopeful possibilities of being-in-the-world 1344
7.5 Case study 1366
7.6 Methodology 1377
7.7 The skate ramp: (non) embodied encounters: (not) dwelling in place 1399
7.7.1 Doing development; the interface of disappointment and hope 140
7.7.2 Possibilities in the ‘not-yet’ for the Skate Ramp 1466
7.8 Conclusion 1488

Chapter 8: Speaking Spanglish: embodying linguistic borderlands in volunteer tourism 1511

8.1 Introduction 1522
8.2 Decolonising binary conceptions of volunteer tourism. 1555
8.3 Towards pluriversal understandings of volunteer tourism 1588
8.4 Situating myself (the researcher) within the body-politics of autoethnography 1599
8.5 (B)orderlands 1622
8.6 Speaking Spanglish – language mediated through empathy 1644
8.7 Conclusion 1711

Chapter 9: Conclusion: embodying hope in research 1744

9.1 Introduction 1744
9.2 Reflecting on relationships and moments: The Australian Day Barbeque, 26 January 2012 1755
9.3 Key Contributions: being ‘affected’ in the field and performativity of research 1766
9.4 Key Contributions: being ‘affected’ is ambivalent 180
9.5 Key ontributions: the hopeful turn in tourism 1833
9.6 What can a weak theory and affective decolonial analysis bring to a hopeful tourism agenda? 1844
9.7 Directions for the volunteer tourism industry 1877

Appendix 1: Interview schedule 190
Appendix 2 Detailed description of volunteering roles at Otra Cosa Network 1978
12.0 Bibliography 2034
Figures

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

Tables

Table 1.1  Thesis interventions and contribution by publication  
Table 3.1  Demographics of volunteers at Otra Cosa Network 2012  
Table 3.2  Demographics of the coordinator and manager at Otra Cosa Network 2012  
Table 3.3  Demographics of local English students at Otra Cosa Network 2012  
Table 3.4  Demographics of volunteers at Otra Cosa Network 2013  
Table 3.5  Demographics of the coordinators and managers at Otra Cosa Network 2012  
Table 3.6  Demographics of the directors 2012-2013  
Table 3.7  Demographics of the volunteers at Fundacion Arte del Mundo 2012  
Table 3.8  Demographics of the volunteers at Fundacion Arte del Mundo 2013  
Table 3.9  Demographics of the local students 2012  
Table 7.1  Demographics of volunteers involved at the Skate Ramp.  
Table 11.1  Volunteer Positions for working with Otra Cosa Network: office and administration  
Table 11.2  Otra Cosa Network: community partnership programs
Abstract

Embodying hope: Intercultural encounters in the (b)orderlands of volunteer tourism

This thesis brings an embodied and affective analysis to existing critiques of volunteer tourism: one that demonstrates intercultural encounters as messy and complex yet also hopeful. In order to comprehend the intangible aspects of embodied encounters in the volunteer tourism experience, the study mobilises the affective turn in the social sciences including hopeful geographies and hopeful tourism literature, alongside decolonial critiques of Eurocentric and universalist ways of understanding the social world.

This thesis, including the four published papers that partially comprise it, presents the volunteer tourism experience as more nuanced, ambivalent and complex than much of the existing critical research on volunteer tourism. It argues that while intercultural encounters are embedded in colonial relations, they are nonetheless filled with moments of empathy and connection. The thesis argues for a remaking of how we analyse, measure and come to know the everyday in volunteer tourism. It is a remaking that is attuned to the importance of affect and emotion in these embodied intercultural encounters. This study offers new insights into how conceptualising the future as ‘not-yet-become’ disrupts Eurocentric temporalities that perpetuate development aid discourses and linear structural notions of social change, opening up parameters of possibilities for hopeful decolonial futures in volunteer tourism.

The decolonial approach that frames this thesis demands a situated perspective and attentiveness to my positionality within the geopolitical landscape. Through autoethnography, I draw on my embodied positionality as a key source of knowledge production and as a way of problematising subjectivities as fixed binary categories. A methodological positionality of ‘in-betweeness’ underlies the research trajectory, where I move in-between the (b)orderlands of minority world researcher and ‘privileged other’, woman/gringa/traveller/volunteer/researcher. I argue that it is within the embodied, affective and emotional lived experience of volunteer tourism, that binaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ can be transgressed.
Ethnographic fieldwork from two organisations in South America: Otra Cosa Network Peru (a non-government organisation) and Arte del Mundo Ecuador (a not-for-profit organisation), are two examples of ‘decommodified’ volunteer tourism. Qualitative data including field notes and reflective diary records of participant observation of the volunteering spaces, alongside semi-structured interviews, reveal that while many of the volunteers themselves drew on development aid discourses to frame their experiences, these particular organisations provide a context where fixed helper/helping dualisms can be subverted. This is because the organisational activities and programs engender intimate relational exchanges between local community members and volunteers. One example is the connectedness and mutuality accompanying language exchange through the medium of Spanglish (a mixture of Spanish and English). In these intercultural encounters volunteers are challenged as their ‘helper’ subjectivities are questioned and their limited cultural and linguistic understandings exposed. These moments of ambivalence represent opportunities for empathetic intercultural communication and understanding.

Drawing together theories of emotion and affect with decolonial theory, this thesis contributes to both the ‘hopeful tourism’ and ‘hopeful geographies’ research agenda by attending to practices of mutuality between ‘different others’, highlighting particular stories of intercultural encounters and affective connections. Hope in volunteer tourism is defined within these intangible processes and relationships.