DISSERTATION

A SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS APPROACH TO VOLUNTEER TOURISM:

THE ROLES OF THE HOST COMMUNITY AND AN ALTERNATIVE BREAK PROGRAM

IN ACHIOTE, PANAMA

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ABSTRACT

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Using a sustainable livelihoods framework as a conceptual and interpretive lens, the purpose of this qualitative study is to understand and explain a long-term, cross-cultural collaborative partnership involved in operationalizing volunteer tourism projects for ecotourism development in rural Panama. There is a call to better represent and understand the roles and perspectives of host communities in order to optimize benefits of volunteer tourism projects in the daily lives of local populations where the projects occur.

This study uses a sustainable livelihoods approach to explore a) livelihood context and trends, b) livelihood resources and volunteer tourism's previous impact on those resources, c) institutional and organizational processes, d) livelihood strategies and volunteer tourism's future impact and potential in the realization of those strategies, and e) sustainable livelihood outcomes. Integrating perspectives of community residents in Achiote, Panama and other volunteer tourism stakeholders aids in assessing the extent to which volunteer tourism projects address their livelihoods' sustainability. The key aspect of volunteer tourism in the context of sustainable livelihoods that separates it from other types of tourism is the potential for volunteer tourism to add to and enhance livelihood diversification through project work.

Collaborative processes among stakeholders in volunteer tourism are not well understood (Lamoureux, 2009), particularly regarding perspectives of and by the host community (Sin, 2009, 2010). However, even if local populations are involved in the decision making process, the

planning, project execution, and operational processes involve multi-scale, cross-cultural engagement of various stakeholders. Stakeholders include residents of the host community, host partner organizations, volunteer tourism sending organizations or operators, leaders or staff for the sending organizations on the ground, the volunteer tourists themselves, among others. In this study, I examine the collaborative processes among residents of a rural Panamanian community, a locally-based ecotourism group, a Panamanian non-governmental organization, a university Alternative Break Program in the United States, and faculty and student leaders of the groups. A further goal was to explore the interrelationship between volunteer tourism and sustainable livelihoods by providing context and voice to the diverse perspectives in the partnership about how volunteer tourism affects the sustainable livelihoods of the host community.

By exploring existing issues in volunteer tourism and giving voices to each part of the partnership, this study aims to provide insight to the stakeholders' dialogue to better identify, implement, and manage projects that maximize benefits of volunteer projects in host communities. When I began this study, I set out to better understand volunteer tourism in the context of a sustainable livelihood approach and its associated cross-cultural collaborative processes. What I found was a region of the world with great respect for themselves, each other, and their land and in the face of potential massive livelihood change and infrastructure development. By presenting the story of this research using narrative writing, I strive to provide a voice and bring attention to a changing rural Panamanian culture.

This research fills a theoretical and practical gap in volunteer tourism. The sustainable livelihoods approach helps understand how volunteer tourism can complement local livelihoods and integrated into the greater processes of the community. Further, exploration of the institutional collaborative relationships involved in implementing volunteer tourism in a

community helps understand decision making processes and structure of volunteer tourism in research and practice. This study brings attention to the visions and nature of the partnership and the people that comprise it, but most importantly the visions and nature of the people of Achiote.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Nestled deep in a Panamanian tropical humid forest is a rural village named Achiote, named after the bright red seed that turns the rivers and soil deep burgundy when it rains. Historically, a drawbridge over the Panama Canal has restricted convenient access of this tiny community of about 600 people from the rest of Panama. In contrast to the multi-billion dollar infrastructure projects and skyscrapers an hour away in Panama City, in Achiote many people use horses for transportation and there is one building with flushing toilets in the village. But change is coming. A vehicular bridge is to be completed over the Gatun Locks of the Canal in 2014 as part of the construction to add a third channel for larger cargo ship access, eliminating Achiote's temporal and physical barriers to the rest of Panama and beyond. This community has experienced great change over the previous decades, but the impacts of change in livelihoods sustainability as a result of this bridge is yet to be seen. Achiote is a unique and complex place, a tiny community in the middle of a dense tropical forest couched in pressing contemporary global issues of development. This dissertation takes the reader on a journey through these issues and seeks to better understand livelihoods in the context of sustainable development, ecotourism development, and volunteer tourism.

This study strives to bring attention to a changing rural Panamanian culture. "Panama, for some Panamanians, is becoming a marginalized economic endeavor complicated by the unavailability of those most affected to provide a voice offering a more proactive reading of the Panamanian landscape" (Jackiewicz & Craine, 2010, p. 22). When I began this study, I set out to better understand volunteer tourism in the context of a sustainable livelihood approach and its associated cross-cultural collaborative processes. What I found was a region of the world with

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great respect for themselves, each other, and their land and in the face of potential massive livelihood change and infrastructure development. Although volunteer tourism has had only a minor impact on the daily functioning and lives of the community as a whole, the impacts ecotourism development projects constructed by volunteer tourists reach beyond physical structure and toward a source of empowerment and capacity building in Achiote.

The global impact of volunteer tourism on local, predominantly rural communities in biodiverse and ecologically sensitive areas is growing. TRAM (2008) estimated a total of 1.6 million volunteer tourists traveling per year with expected continued growth. The voluntary sector as a whole accounts for an equivalent of 10 million full-time employees, excluding volunteers with religious affiliated organizations. The local human and environmental implications of the impacts of volunteer tourists, however, are less understood. I specifically wanted to explore the potential of volunteer tourism through collaborative efforts and a focus on sustainable livelihoods for project management. Although volunteer tourism is becoming increasingly popular in Panama and other developing regions around the world, it is not currently as well researched as some popular volunteer tourism destinations, such as sea turtle conservation in Costa Rica (e.g. Campbell & Smith, 2005; Gray & Campbell, 2007). Further, the collaborative processes involved in operationalizing volunteer tourism have been virtually untouched in the literature (Lamoureux, 2009).

In this study, a United States university Alternative Break program has been sending groups to Achiote, Panama to conduct ecotourism development projects for one week per year for nine years. A partnership comprised of the community members of Achiote, a local ecotourism group, a Panamanian non-governmental organization (NGO), and the university has been upheld over time. The partnership is long term, but the volunteer projects are short term. In

this study, I assess the impacts of these ecotourism development volunteer projects on the local livelihoods of the people in Achiote. In doing so, it is impossible to negate the implications of large-scale infrastructure development and Panama's growing tourism industry on the livelihood changes and future of sustainability in Achiote.

Because of the reported increases in participation of volunteer tourists in increasingly diverse and wide-ranging geographical and cultural contexts (Benson, 2011), the increase in reported negative impacts of volunteer tourism to the detriment of local communities over the past few years (Guttentag, 2009; Raymond & Hall, 2008a), as well as and the integrated cross-cultural nature of volunteer tourism (Raymond & Hall, 2008a; Wearing, 2001, 2004), the need to understand how volunteer tourism impacts livelihood sustainability is increasing. For this research, I adapted a sustainable livelihoods framework to address the complexity of volunteer tourism. I use a qualitative research approach for a thick and rich understanding of volunteer tourism stakeholders' and communities' experiences with long term volunteer tourism influence in the host community. I investigate the level of communication and collaboration among volunteer tourism stakeholders for a sustainable livelihoods approach to project implementation and management from these perspectives. Although using a sustainable livelihood framework is not a panacea, understanding the livelihood needs and wants of the community can help stakeholders tailor volunteer projects to fit those needs and wants and aid in local sustainability. The approach can also help stakeholders involved in implementing volunteer tourism projects understand their own roles as well as the communities' roles and perhaps strengthen relationships. Additionally, better understanding among volunteer tourism partners may increase intercultural learning and cross-cultural understanding, transcending the commercial nature of tourist-host interactions by addressing and enhancing the livelihood sustainability of local

populations. The parameters of successful and sustainable volunteer tourism projects are being explored. Given the dynamic and diverse nature of volunteer tourism in practice and theory, consensus on a best approach or framework for volunteer tourism may never be reached. However, we do know many of the challenges and critiques brought forth, and an approach to volunteer tourism should consider and involve the livelihood needs and wants of the host community.

The current trend of volunteer tourism as a means of achieving development through the traditionally leisure-based activity of tourism has added a complex dimension to tourism theory and practice. Tourism in all its forms has been discussed at length as a mechanism for development. Volunteer tourism, in contrast to other forms of tourism, exists for the fundamental purpose of development in various forms, whether community development, conservation, or scientific research projects (Wearing, 2001). Volunteer tourism is distinguished from ecotourism and sustainable tourism, as the latter two involve tourists learn about and experience culture and nature. Tourists in this sense are fundamentally still touring a destination, whereas volunteer tourists enact development projects on the ground in addition to learning about and experiencing nature and culture as well as touring the place. The act of volunteering, rather than solely touring the destination, brings volunteer tourism into the realm of international development and aid work (Devereux, 2008). Wearing suggests that in contrast to the mass tourism industry, volunteer tourism "represents both an opportunity and a means of value adding in an industry that seems to represent consumer capitalism at its worst" (2002, p. 238).

Volunteer tourism is "a development strategy leading to sustainable development and centering on the convergence of natural resource qualities, local people and the visitors that all benefit from tourism activity" (Wearing, 2001, p. 12). This definition of volunteer tourism

inherently connects global processes of development with local people, although the processes in which these occur in practice are vastly complex in order for volunteer tourism to be able to attain sustainable development.

A sustainable livelihoods approach to development holistically synergizes issues at the community level, focusing on the real lives of people and their inherent knowledge and capacities (Helmore & Singh, 2001). Similarly, the goal of sustainable tourism is to provide livelihood benefits to host destinations and protect local cultures and environments while developing economically viable industries (Simpson, 2009). Volunteers, in addition to adding to economic viability of a community, participate in projects aimed at alleviating poverty and enhancing environmental sustainability (Wearing, 2001). Livelihood diversification is "the process by which rural families construct a diverse portfolio of activities and social support capabilities in their struggle for survival and in order to improve their standards of living" (Ellis, 1998, p. 5).

Further, several studies have found that the benefits realized by sending organizations and volunteer tourists are greater and prioritized over local interests (Brown & Lehto, 2005; Callanan & Thomas, 2005; McGehee & Andereck, 2008; Salazar, 2004). The research that has been presented has focused mostly on the attitudes, identities, behaviors, values, motives, and personal development of the volunteer tourist (e.g. Broad, 2003; Brown & Morrison, 2003; Campbell & Smith, 2005, 2006; Halpenny & Caissie, 2003; McGehee, 2002; McGehee & Santos, 2005; Mustonen, 2005; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Wearing, 2001, 2002, 2004). The research that has been conducted regarding the host communities has focused on Othering and dependency or on the intricacies of the mutually beneficial relationship between host communities and the volunteer tourists. Additionally, short-term volunteering is becoming more

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popular within the volunteer tourism industry (Halpenny & Caissie, 2003), deeming the heralded integrated cross-cultural connection between volunteer tourists and host communities more fragmented and difficult to achieve (Raymond, 2008). The literature detailing volunteer tourists is vast and is not the focus of this study. Therefore, a holistic approach to volunteer tourism should be developed to understand the processes and outcomes of volunteer tourism at all levels.

Purpose of the Study

Using a sustainable livelihoods framework as a conceptual and interpretive lens, the purpose of this qualitative study is to explain a long-term, cross-cultural collaborative partnership involved in operationalizing volunteer tourism projects for ecotourism development in rural Panama. Collaborative processes among stakeholders in volunteer tourism are not well understood (Lamoureux, 2009), particularly regarding perspectives of and by the host community (Sin, 2009, 2010). There is a call to better represent and understand the roles and perspectives of host communities in order to optimize benefits of volunteer tourism projects in the daily lives of local populations where the projects occur. However, even if local populations are involved in the decision making process, the planning, project execution, and operational processes involve multi-scale, cross-cultural engagement of various stakeholders. Stakeholders include volunteer tourism sending organizations or operators, host partner organizations, leaders or staff for the organizations on the ground, the volunteer tourists themselves, among others. Specifically, I examine the collaborative processes among residents of a rural Panamanian community, a locally-based ecotourism group, a Panamanian NGO, a university Alternative Break Program, and faculty and student leaders of the groups. A further goal was to explore the interrelationship between volunteer tourism and sustainable livelihoods by providing context and

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voice to the diverse perspectives in the partnership about how volunteer tourism affects the sustainable livelihoods of the host community.

Integrating perspectives of community residents in Achiote, Panama aids in assessing the extent to which volunteer tourism projects address their livelihoods' sustainability. Integration of local livelihood interests is a keystone to successful and effective volunteer tourism projects. By exploring existing issues in volunteer tourism and giving voices to each part of the partnership, this study aims to provide a multi-scale dialogue among stakeholders to better identify, implement, and manage projects that maximize benefits of volunteer projects in host communities.

A modified sustainable livelihoods framework adapted for volunteer tourism provides a holistic lens to consider dynamic livelihoods of local people for operationalizing sustainable projects for this study, as well as a potential guide for volunteer tourism researchers, practitioners, and collaborative partnerships. The sustainable livelihoods framework is adapted from Scoones (1998) and other scholars studying sustainable livelihoods and tourism (Simpson, 2009; Tao & Wall, 2009). Within the framework, a sustainable livelihoods analysis explores a) livelihood contexts, conditions, and trends, b) livelihood resources and volunteer tourism's previous impact on those resources, c) institutional processes and organizational structures, d) livelihood strategies and volunteer tourism's future impact and potential in the realization of those strategies, and e) sustainable livelihood and volunteer tourism impacts and influences. The sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism is shown in Figure 1.1 and is the conceptual lens for this study.
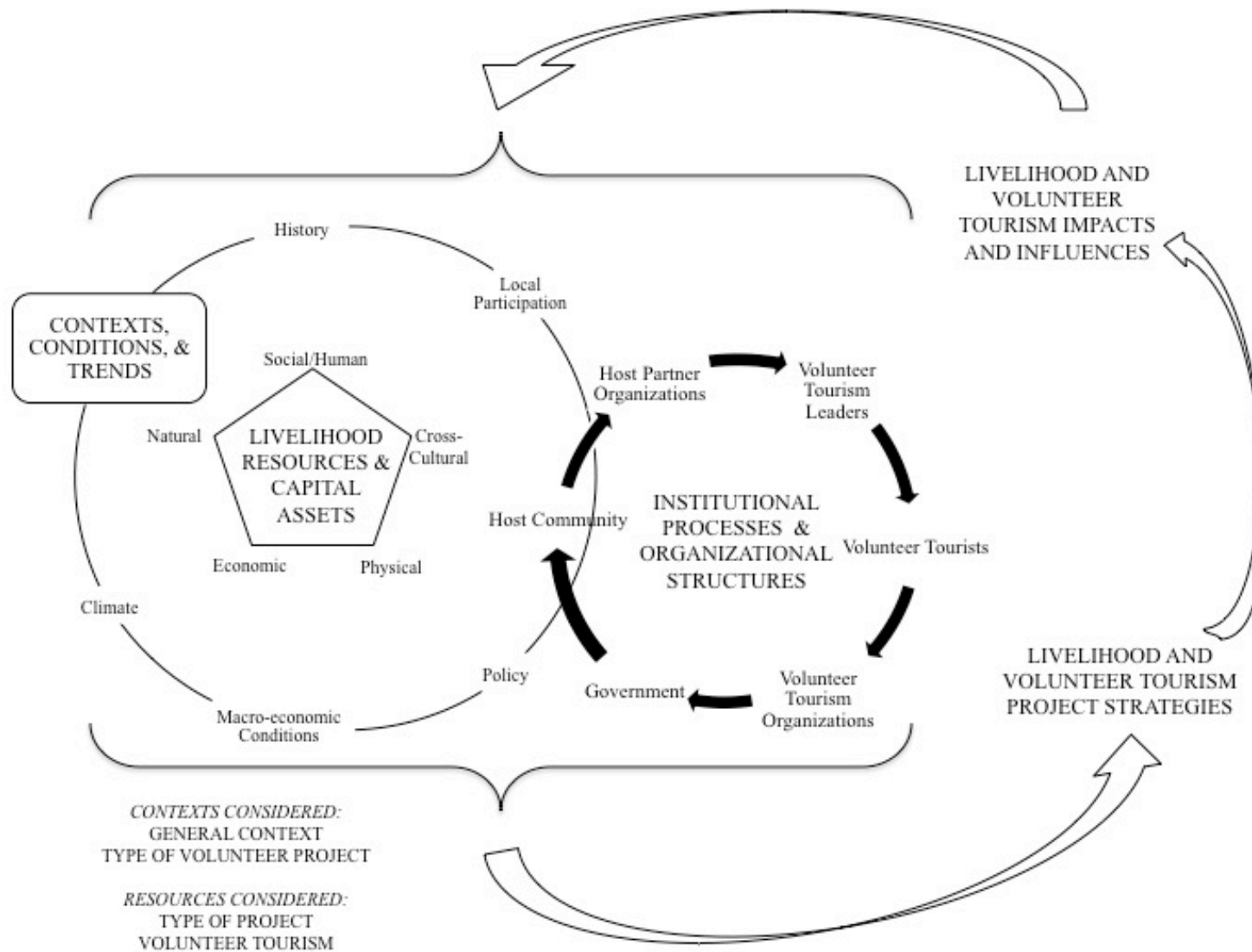
Figure 1.1. Sustainable livelihoods research framework adapted for volunteer tourism

Critiques of volunteer tourism regarding sustainability and impacts of projects on communities' daily lives are increasing, particularly when projects are completed by short-term volunteers. The sustainable livelihoods approach presents an appropriate venue for this type of assessment with its focus on local people's resources and capitals as a baseline for understanding the system in which volunteer tourism takes place.

> The industry is, after all, premised on the idea that one person's impoverishment or environmental degradation is another's opportunity for adventure and personal growth, rendering the structural inequalities that characterize many host/guest encounters a fundamental and necessary feature in this sort of tourism (Garland, 2012, p. 6).

Each level of analysis of the framework comprises a holistic analysis of sustainable livelihoods. This framework is tailored for the analysis of volunteer tourism. Particular attention is given to the institutional processes and organizational structures because cohesive, well-formed, multi-scale partnerships are vital to sustainable volunteer tourism projects.

Research Questions

This study attempts to situate volunteer tourism into the broader context of global development all the way to the household and individual scale while integrating the need for and importance of collaboration throughout based on the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the perspectives and visions of volunteer tourism stakeholders involved in a long-term collaborative partnership?

RQ2: How can a sustainable livelihoods framework be used to understand and explain volunteer tourism?

Specifically, I examine how the sustainable livelihoods framework focuses on the community and simultaneously explains the desires and potential experience of stakeholders involved in short-term volunteer tourism investing in communities' sustainable development. I collected 31 interviews for this study including people in the host community, a local ecotourism group, a national NGO, leaders of the groups in the volunteer tourism organization, and several supporting interviews for context and clarification of key issues. I also conducted a focus group, meetings, presentations, participant observation, and wrote detailed field notes. The next section details the context of this research and the people and places involved in this study.

Research Context

This research is focused on the rural community of Achiote, Panama because of the global significance of its cultural and biological diversity and the community's experience with volunteer tourism. They have previously held the world record for the number of bird species seen in one day, and have recorded 81 species of mammals and 430 bird species in the neighboring San Lorenzo National Park (Road Scholar, 2012). At the national level, the tourism industry in Panama is growing rapidly. The country was listed as a top destination for 2012 by several globally distributed media sources, including the top travel destination in the world by *The New York Times* (Williams, 2012), *National Geographic*'s Best of the World 2012 list (National Geographic, 2012), and the Hottest Travel Destinations for 2012 list by *Travel and Leisure Magazine* (Travel and Leisure, 2012).

The volunteer projects take place during the students' spring break in March. The structure of the partnership and means of communication among them have remained consistent throughout the years. The presence of volunteers in Achiote for only one week per year means

that the community is minorly affected by volunteer tourism projects throughout the rest of the

year and therefore does not experience constant impact in their daily lives.

This study aims to strengthen theoretical and practical knowledge of situating volunteer

tourism within sustainable livelihoods frameworks and encourages future local participation and

collaboration in volunteer tourism. The people involved in this volunteer tourism partnership are

described below.

Achiote, Panama. Achiote, Panama is a rural community of approximately 600 residents

situated on the northern, Caribbean coast in the Canal Zone nestled in tropical humid forest. The

primary industries are cattle, coffee, bananas, and small enterprises. The community is only a

twenty-minute drive through a global hotspot for bird biodiversity from the Panama Canal. In

Figure 1.2, the area where Achiote is located is west of the city of Colon in Colon Province,

Panama.

Figure 1.2. Map of Panama (Geology, 2007)

Many people in the community value close-knit relationships with their family and neighbors. Many talk about how much they love living there. Every single Achiote resident interviewed for this study described their community as *tranquilo*, meaning quiet, peaceful, or relaxed. It is a village where not only everybody knows each other, but many families are interconnected and many residents depend on each other for economic survival. In my interviews with Achiote community members, everyone talked about taking care of and trying to help the people, meaning their family, neighbors, and the people that pass through Achiote. In English, there is not a sufficient direct translation for the phrase *tratar bien*. When I look up the phrase, it only says it means to be kind. However, tratar bien carries more meaning than just being kind. It means to take care and strive for good intentions with others. There's more heart and feeling involved in the phrase than just being kind. *Tratar bien* is the basis of relationships for many in Achiote.

Achiote has experienced quite a bit of change over the previous decades. Electricity wasn't available until 1970. The road was paved in the early 1990s, allowing easier passage of people as they were no longer hindered by unpredictable rainy season mudslides. They received cellular telephone service a few years ago, and now many of the youth blast their phone's sound. There is one restaurant, but no bank, no internet service, no garbage collection, no postal service, and no hotels. There is no grocery store aside from a small market mostly stocked with nonperishable food and goods and a produce truck that visits twice weekly.

The drawbridge over the Gatun Locks of the Panama Canal still hinders consistent transport to the city of Colon and the rest of Panama. On the other hand, the drawbridge, the road, and cellular service connect Achiote residents to Colon and the rest of Panama and it allows access travel and employment in Colon much easier. Many young adults hold jobs

associated with the Canal and commute. The juxtaposition between traditional *campo* life and

progress in transportation and communication is apparent. Walking down the street in Achiote, it

is typical to pass a neighbor sleeping in a hammock on his rotting wooden home's porch. It is

just as typical to pass the next house, vibrantly painted and landscaped with birds of paradise,

with the 19 year old's car parked in front bumping Reggaeton and talking on his Blackberry.

Figure 1.3 displays the area immediately west of the Gatun Locks, including San Lorenzo

Protected Area and the nearby villages to Achiote, Piña and Unión de Piña.

Figure 1.3. Map of Achiote and San Lorenzo (Birdwatching Panama, 2007)

One of my first experiences in Achiote was listening to an older woman talk about how

all the youth were moving to Colon and living in apartments with boys and girls together and

they don't even know their neighbors. She stated multiple times that she was not accustomed to this lifestyle. However, this same woman is incredibly proud of her children for moving to Panama City to work in tourism and with the Canal Authority and having the opportunity to be educated and live a different life. Many of her possessions are gifts from her children's success living elsewhere. Achiote is typical of many small villages in Latin America, and particularly Panama, in that more wealth and opportunities are changing the way many have lived for generations. Changes in transportation, communication, infrastructure development, and livelihood structure are salient to Achiote residents.

La Asociación Centro de Estudios y Acción Social Panameño (CEASPA). In this study, there are two host partner organizations. The first is the Panamanian-based NGO that's name translates in English to The Panamanian Center for Research and Social Action (CEASPA). For over 30 years, CEASPA has initiated numerous programs across the country to alleviate poverty, promote environmental sustainability, and enhance education in Panama. CEASPA was founded in 1977 by a Catholic priest, a sociologist, and an economist. Their projects focus on issues of the poor, social justice, and marginalized people in Panama and the region, particularly through action research and education, and have over the years come to include environmental justice. Their mission is:

> Development of research activity and science education based on social, political, economic and cultural development. The Association promotes the development of Panamanian society, especially the poor and excluded, and to contribute efficiently to the deep understanding of national problems, and contribute to the search for the best solutions and alternatives to overcome the challenges of development (CEASPA, 2007).

CEASPA acts as the communication medium between Grupo Ecoturismo Los Rapaces and the volunteer tourists throughout the year. They are responsible for logistical planning details and communicating the needs and wants of Los Rapaces to the volunteer tourists since internet and post services are unavailable in the community. CEASPA has stated that with each year they receive volunteers from CSU, they observe better organization, collaboration, and project coordination (CEASPA, 2007). A community center they named El Centro el Tucán and a community-operated restaurant named Restaurante Cascá were built as a part of projects initiated by CEASPA, in addition to the formation of Los Rapaces. Several women in the village operate the restaurant. The operations of tourism activities in the community have been brought under control gradually over the years from CEASPA to Los Rapaces.

Grupo Ecoturismo Los Rapaces. Los Rapaces is a locally based and locally operated ecotourism development group in Achiote. Los Rapaces works most closely with the volunteers during the on-site construction of the projects. They are the primary decision-makers in the selection, planning, management, and execution of the projects. They also are the primary coordinators of the volunteer tourists' experiences in the community, including accommodations, extracurricular activities, and meals. Comprised of a group of Achiote community members, Los Rapaces manages the restaurant and the ecotourism activities in the community. The group is comprised of only six people. The president of Los Rapaces is the sole man in the group, Ricardo, and he assumes the role of visionary and leader of the group. Their purpose is to alleviate poverty in the region through ecotourism.

Every year, the decisions made for choosing a project, ecotourism activities provided to the volunteers, meals, accommodations, travel, and all the information and ideas involved in the preparation of the arrival of the volunteer tourists starts in October. Los Rapaces holds a meeting

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in Achiote with CEASPA representatives to discuss possible project options. Logistical

considerations such as cost, materials, and professional construction expertise needed, who will

be involved in the community, and successes and challenges from previous years are discussed.

They also consider how the project fits into their vision as a community-based ecotourism group.

After the meeting is finished and a project chosen, Los Rapaces coordinates with surrounding

community ecotourism stakeholders and operators that provide the activities for the volunteer

tourists. The CEASPA representatives relay the information and decisions to the CEASPA

national office in Panama City and to the university student leaders and Alternative Break

coordinators in the United States. This has been the standing process for the past seven years.

University Alternative Breaks: For this study, the sending organization is a university

Alternative Break program. The university has been sending student volunteers to Achiote,

Panama for almost ten years. The university has been said to provide a more legitimate space for

sending volunteers seeking a more authentic experience (Palacios, 2010). "A university is in

many senses a better candidate to run volunteer programs than a simple travel agency: it is more

likely to provide accountability, reflection and learning outcomes" (Palacios, 2010, p. 862). The

Alternative Break program focuses on service learning and nightly reflections with the student

volunteers while performing the projects in Achiote.

Alternative Breaks Student and Faculty Leaders. In this study, leaders are students and

faculty at the university. Student leaders are undergraduate volunteers working to improve their

leadership skills and enhance their cross-cultural experience and knowledge. The majority of the

responsibility for planning the trip, coordinating and communicating with the Panamanian

project partners, and preparing the student volunteer group rests with the student leaders. Most of

the student leaders were student participants in the previous year's trip. Spanish language skills

are not a requirement, although highly encouraged by the Alternative Break coordinators. The student leaders conduct nightly reflections with the group while in Panama and are in charge of handling issues with group dynamics and other issues that arise. Their primary responsibility is to facilitate an enriching experience for the students on the trip.

There are two student leaders and two faculty leaders per trip. Faculty leaders are appointed by the university as supervisors. Several of the faculty leaders interviewed for this study said that their primary responsibility for their position is to make sure the students "don't die." They help with student leaders' roles and responsibilities when they see fit and informally teach the student volunteers according to their previous experience with relevant local and national issues and dynamics. However, their primary role is to accompany the students and bring them home safely.

Volunteer Tourists: I chose not to include volunteer tourists in this investigation. Much is already known about their particular dynamics, but less is known about the functioning of volunteer tourism as a whole and the other stakeholders' roles and perceptions. The mutually beneficial concept of volunteer tourism has been predominantly represented through the understanding of only one side of the story, whereas "understanding the phenomenon of volunteering in tourism should take into account both the demand and the supply sides of the industry" (Uriely, Reichel, & Ron, 2003, p. 61). In this study, the volunteer tourists are the student volunteer participants on the Alternative Break trip. They are students at the university and opt to spend their spring break vacation time performing ecotourism development projects in rural Panama instead of a more traditional spring break experience.

Highly varied perceptions of the host communities, host partner organizations, volunteer tourism organizations, and volunteer tourism project leaders lead us to an in-depth exploration of

their dynamics. In order to situate volunteer tourism for theoretical or practical application, an investigation into the collaborative relationships within volunteer tourism may elicit concrete ways to improve project implementation and management of more successful and sustainable volunteer tourism projects which address the livelihoods of local people and their surrounding ecosystems. The next section details the background of the partnership to situate this research for historic and geographic context.

Enter the University and Volunteer Tourism

The year after Los Rapaces was formed, the university sent the first group of 20 volunteers to Achiote to construct a bird watching platform with Los Rapaces. The initial idea to send volunteer groups to the community was formulated through the partnership among CEASPA, the university, and Los Rapaces. Since then, every year a group of students, student leaders, and university faculty leaders travel to the community to construct a new ecotourism project with Los Rapaces. The projects are chosen by Los Rapaces with a CEASPA representative present. Due to the community's limited access to internet and international telephone services, the idea and logistics are then relayed through CEASPA to the university student leaders and the Alternative Break Program. Over a duration of eight years, the volunteer projects include two bird watching platforms, a small museum detailing the historical and cultural connection the community has to coffee production, a small trail to learn about growing coffee, and most recently a small ecotourism cabin. Photographs of each project are displayed in Table 1.1.

In addition to the construction of ecotourism development projects, Los Rapaces takes the opportunity to test their potential ecotourism activities and operations with the students. Because ecotourism in the area is largely nascent, Los Rapaces gains feedback from the students

Table 1.1. *Photographs of ecotourism development volunteer projects from 2005 to 2012*

2005 & 2006 *Bird Watching* *Platforms behind El* *Centro el Tucán and* *Restaurante Cascá*	
2007 *Ruta del Café*	
2008 *Casa Museo*	
2009 *Develop Exhibit and* *Paint Casa Museo*	
2010 *Restaurant in Escobal*	*no photos available*
2011 *Rehabilitation and* *Reparation of Trails* *and Bird Watching* *Platforms*	
2012 *Cabana/ Casa de* *Hospedaje*	

while testing out various ecotourism opportunities in their region, such as a river boat tour or a visit to a local organic coffee farm. There are no other groups that volunteer for this duration or scale in the community throughout the rest of the year. The only other volunteer activities with Los Rapaces can be characterized by sporadic day trips from largely Panamanian volunteers with the Panamanian National Environmental Authority (ANAM). The structure of the partnership, the nature of the projects, the short-term duration of the volunteer stays, and the demographics of the volunteers are all characteristic of the volunteer tourism industry. The structure of the partnership is mimicked in several other studies striving to portray a holistic perception of volunteer tourism, meaning that the researchers derived data from the sending organization, partner organization, volunteer tourism staff or leaders, and volunteer tourists (e.g. Gray & Campbell, 2007; Lacey, Peel, & Weiler, 2012; Palacios, 2010; Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004).

The nature of the projects is focused on development and capacity building for ecotourism in Achiote to support a budding community ecotourism group. Development-based projects are the focus of international volunteer tourism, particularly in low-income countries (Vodopevic & Jaffe, 2011). The projects are characteristic of short-term volunteer tourism as the university groups only participate in the volunteer activities for one week per year. The demographics of the student volunteers that participate in the projects are consistent with a number of studies focusing on the 17–25 year old age group (Wearing, 2004). While many aspects of volunteer tourism in Achiote are consistent with volunteer tourism in rural communities, a study on sustainable livelihoods and the perspectives of the host community about the volunteer tourism activities in Achiote is particularly appropriate as it is virtually uninfluenced by other volunteer activities.

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is separated into five chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter II reviews the literature of the most relevant themes and issues included in this study. In particular, a thorough review of volunteer tourism, the role of host communities in tourism and volunteer tourism, development, and sustainable livelihoods is provided.

Chapter III details the methodological framework and the research process I followed for this study. I used appreciative interviewing and narrative research techniques for the data collection, analysis, and written portion of this qualitative study as the methodological framework. In this chapter, I also describe the methods used to collect data in Panama which include in-depth interviews, participant observation, field notes, a focus group, meetings with the partner organizations, and two presentations. I interviewed host community residents, people involved with the host partner organizations of Grupo Ecoturismo Los Rapaces and CEASPA, student and faculty leaders of the university Alternative Break volunteer projects, Panamanian ecotourism professionals, and people involved in development activities in the area. I combine their responses to form a composite narrative in Chapters IV and V that highlight key issues and themes that arose from this research.

Chapter IV presents the results of the study loosely following the structure of the sustainable livelihoods framework. Because a goal of this study was to present the data collected in a narrative, I loosely follow the framework to allow the themes and context of the stories to flow rather than conforming the data into rigid categories. I first set the scene for livelihoods in Achiote and describe the history and background of the partnership for volunteer tourism and the relevant institutional structures that influence the livelihoods of people in Achiote. I then describe broader context, conditions, and trends for development and tourism. Livelihood

resources are described as assets and barriers for capacity for ecotourism and volunteer tourism activities in Achiote. An analysis of the impacts and key assets and challenges of the volunteer projects on the livelihoods of the community concludes the chapter.

Chapter V, I discuss the nuances and dynamics of using a sustainable livelihoods approach to assess volunteer tourism. In particular, I focus on vulnerability context and resilience of livelihoods to shocks and stresses and address livelihood strategies for the future. I conclude this dissertation by synthesizing the information collected in this study and proposing a longitudinal research plan involving continual analysis of ecotourism development processes, volunteer tourism, and the sustainable livelihoods. The research plan focuses on engagement, relationships, and capacity building with the people of Achiote and the existing partnerships for this study as well as suggestions for including new partners.

Conclusion

Referring specifically of the tourist industry and development in Panama, Jackiewicz and Craine asserted that "it imposes its own meanings of land ownership onto the landscape by incorporating narratives of desire and consumption into the transactional process and Panamanian meanings and histories are often lost in the objectification of the desires of the capitalist North" (p. 24). Providing a voice to those yet largely unaffected by the massive influx of development and economic resources may provide a more authentic reading of the Panamanian landscape as they are not yet as jaded by the impacts as their neighbors in other parts of Panama that are flooded with residential tourists and mass tourism activities.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In the face of global climate change, devastating natural disasters from Thailand to Haiti to Chile to Pakistan, and persistent silent crises of poverty and disease, volunteers are said to be the unsung heroes of development (UNV, 2005). The volunteer projects that occur on the ground are vast and varied, ranging from the Caribbean Conservation Corporation's sea turtle conservation in Costa Rica (Campbell & Smith, 2005) to Habitat for Humanity's construction of shelter in South Africa (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004) to WorldPULSE's Youth Ambassador Program that provides a cross-cultural leadership training program for underprivileged young adults (McGehee & Santos, 2005). Volunteer tourism is an increasingly important, multi-faceted, and useful development tool connecting developing and developed economies from global to local scales.

If taken into account that tourism is debated as the largest industry in the world, as well as the increase in popularity and availability of various sustainability initiatives (think fair trade coffee, benefit concerts, or going locavore), it is no surprise that more people are choosing to volunteer for their vacations over recent years. Alternative development schemes such as volunteer tourism are increasingly attentive to local needs, livelihoods, and processes as a way to counter and address globalization's negative influences, failures of contemporary economic policy, and unsustainability. A multitude of approaches have been developed in this regard, but an overriding theme of attention to collaboration with and by local populations pervades these development ideas. Sustainable development, sustainable livelihoods, community development, capacity development and capacity building are examples. These concepts entail their own

respective approaches, frameworks, theories, and practical strategies to development, all of which directly apply to volunteer tourism theory and practice.

The theoretical framework of this study involves complex social phenomena and their associated definitional debates, and social constructions. Perhaps the most important and pervasive theme of this research, and therefore the reason for this document to begin with this concept, is collaboration. Collaboration is needed to address complex global and local issues that cannot be properly tackled otherwise. The need to develop functioning collaborative partnerships has been called for in the literature regarding:

- development approaches (Axinn & Axinn, 1997; Smith & Yanacopoulos, 2004),

- sustainable development (Redclift, 1987, 2005), sustainable tourism (Cole, 2006; Selin, 1999; Selin & Chavez, 1995),

- sustainable livelihoods (Bebbington, 1999; Gale & Selin, n.d.; Helmore & Singh, 2001; Scoones, 1998; Simpson, 2007),

- community capacity development in tourism (Jamal & Getz, 1995; Jamal & Stronza, 2010; Moscardo, 2008; Reed, 1999; Sammy, 2008),

- appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, 2005; Egan & Lancaster, 2005; Finegold, Holland, & Lingham, 2002; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003),

- narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), and

- volunteer tourism (Devereux, 2008; Gray & Campbell, 2007; Lamoureux, 2009; McGehee & Andereck, 2008; Raymond, 2008; Raymond & Hall, 2008).

Increased understanding of collaborative processes aids in the functioning of the entire system and achieving sustainability through development-based and conservation volunteer tourism projects.

Volunteer Tourism Description and Definition

Volunteer tourism, or travel with intent to volunteer, is fundamentally different than other forms of alternative tourism. When volunteer tourists perform community development projects such as building a school, environmental conservation projects like eradicating invasive species, or research in the area like monitoring bird species, the premise of volunteer tourism involves direct and indirect impacts and change to the host destination. Volunteer tourism:

> Applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment (Wearing, 2001, p. 1).

A variety of terminology has emerged in the literature to describe the phenomenon of volunteering in a tourism context including tourism volunteering (Holmes, Smith, Lockstone-Binney, & Baum, 2010), international volunteering (Devereux, 2008), international service (Lewis, 2006), volunteer vacations (Brown & Morrison, 2005), serious leisure volunteering (Wearing, 2001), voluntourism (Lee & Woosnam, 2010; McGehee & Santos, 2005), and volunteer tourism. Although slight variations in definition and focus exist in reference to terminology, as is the case with many emerging areas of study, I use volunteer tourism to describe the phenomenon, as this term is the most commonly used and accepted within the literature.

The mantra of the volunteer tourism industry has become make a difference, urging potential volunteer tourists to embark on a journey that will simultaneously aid in development practice as well as intercultural learning and international understanding in the form of a meaningful experience (Fee & Mdee, 2011; Ingram, 2011; Lewis, 2006; Palacios, 2010; Raymond, 2008; Wearing, 2001). Development has become fashionable thanks to volunteer tourism, as well as its trendy counterparts such as fair trade, benefit concerts, and many other development-based alternatives, yet increasingly mainstream activities (Ingram, 2011). This trend can be explained, in part, by the creation of a global community sentiment, with individuals feeling simultaneously increasingly interconnected as well as disconnected from the rest of the world. Volunteer tourism may help individuals respond to potential identity confusion as a result of globalization connecting people from different cultures, backgrounds, and values in a united cause-based partnership for development.

The key aspect that sets volunteer tourism apart from other forms of tourism is the bilateral benefits derived by the host communities and the volunteer tourist. Volunteer tourism provides a more in-depth, authentic tourism experience characterized by highly integrated cross-cultural interaction, educational components, and includes community development, conservation or nature-based projects, and research (Wearing, 2001). Volunteer tourism bridges geographic and ideological gaps and can be a realistic, creative, empowering, and powerful global development tool. As an industry, it has the potential to not only reach beyond current economic systems as a nonmarket mechanism based on trust, international understanding, capacity building, and relationship development, but also help to achieve direct and tangible benefits through project work on the ground (Devereux, 2008).

Volunteer tourists primarily travel from developed, rich countries to developing, poor countries (Wearing, 2002), which inherently establishes power issues between host (i.e. typically residents of rural communities where volunteer projects take place) and guest (i.e. volunteer tourists). However, highly integrated experiences between volunteers and host communities are said to create relationships and greater cross-cultural understanding (Wearing, 2001). According to Lewis (2006), volunteer tourism can provide not only tangible contributions to development, but also promote international understanding and solidarity. Volunteers can therefore raise awareness of underlying causes of poverty, injustice, and unsustainable development when they return home (Devereux, 2008).

Many major international development schemes are operationalized by the volunteer tourism industry through a variety of approaches, projects, and in diverse and complex geographical, social, economic, and cultural contexts. By nature, volunteer development projects are diverse. In this section, I mention several ways that demonstrate the breadth and potential of volunteers' work around the world. Volunteer tourism sending organizations frequently partner with NGOs to help designate where and to what capacity projects are done. NGOs are frequently called upon in international development work (Ingram, 2011; Sachs & McArthur, 2005). Volunteer tourism organizations' preexisting links to the local level and access to free labor via volunteers provides a structure for achievement of development projects, particularly in the poorest countries.

According to Sachs and McArthur (2005), the poorest countries most need development assistance in order to emerge from the poverty trap, in contrast to other developing countries whose responsibility of poverty reduction is predominantly their own. Unfortunately, although volunteer tourism tends to occur in developing countries, volunteer tourism organizations tend to

avoid sending volunteers to the poorest countries. Keese (2011) found in a study of the twelve

member organizations that comprise the International Volunteer Programs Association, the most

important criteria for choosing locations to send volunteers were safety, need, attractiveness of

the place, presence of local partner organizations, previous staff experience, and accessibility.

Moreover, despite debates regarding power structures and self-interested volunteer tourists,

volunteer tourism contributes to many forms of development around the world.

Bi-directional development volunteering increases relationship development between

developed and developing countries through volunteer exchange programs (Joyce, 2009).

Callanan and Thomas (2005) developed a breakdown of volunteer tourism activities by project

activities of over 1,000 volunteer projects around the world. The most frequent category of

volunteer projects being community welfare, volunteers around the world work to reduce

poverty by donating time and capacity building (Devereux, 2008; Lewis, 2006). They build

schools and teach children, which was the second most common volunteer activity found by

Callanan and Thomas (2005). In South Africa, Habitat for Humanity and other local

organizations integrate women into the decision-making process, design, and construction and

are committed to their full participation in the process (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004). Programs

like Doctors and Nurses without Borders provide medical expertise and resources to help reduce

child mortality, improve maternal health, and combat HIV/ AIDS, malaria and other diseases. As

of 2005, most countries, if not all, were failing to achieve the environmental sustainability targets

(Sachs & McArthur, 2005). Unskilled volunteer tourists perhaps most easily achieve this goal, as

most conservation work requires few formal skills and little training. Volunteers work to achieve

environmental sustainability through planting native species, eradicating invasive species, or

building wildlife refuges (Halpenny & Caissie, 2003). Perhaps one of the most researched and

popular conservation-related volunteer projects are sea turtle conservation efforts in Costa Rica (Campbell, & Smith, 2005; Gray & Campbell, 2007).

Each study, discussion, critique, and discourse within volunteer tourism mentions the sensitivity of cross-cultural interaction and intercultural learning between volunteer tourists and host communities. Partnerships within volunteer tourism must address this aspect and work to attain a global partnership for development based on trust, commitment, and understanding in order for projects to be successful and sustainable. Through volunteer tourism, the causes of (under)development can be challenged with enhanced collaboration and action aiding in increased global–local communication and understanding and through developing more equal relationships (Devereux, 2008). The potential of volunteer tourism as a mechanism and driver of development exists, but not without associated critiques and challenges.

Volunteers make a difference – What kind of difference is being made?

A mutually beneficial experience is assumed to occur between volunteer tourist and host in that the volunteer tourist benefits in the form of personal development, while the host destinations benefit from the volunteer projects. "The scholarly literature on volunteer tourism is broadly divided between authors who are hopeful about the phenomenon, and those critical of the industry" (Garland, 2012, p. 6). Researchers have questioned the benevolence of volunteer tourism, referring to power, domination, and class exploitation issues between the interactions of the economically and socially powerful tourists volunteering in a less powerful, remote host community in the developing world (Guttentag, 2009; Mowforth & Munt, 2008; Raymond & Hall, 2008a; Sin, 2009). Particularly when volunteers stay for a short period of time, critiques include the role of the voice of the Other (Guttentag, 2009; Lacey, Peel, & Weiler, 2012), cross-cultural misunderstandings between guest and host (Raymond & Hall, 2008a), little local

involvement in decision making, insufficient or incomplete project work due to short-term stays

of low-skilled volunteers, and dependency and decreased employment opportunities (Guttentag,

2009).

> The pitch is simple. Instead of two weeks sipping wine somewhere comfortable,
>
> somewhere scenic, put your money to better use and volunteer your labour to a
>
> Third World charity or aid agency. The idea oozes with virtue. And when
>
> something sounds so good, I get bothered. For one thing, I have to wonder what
>
> real value the volunteer tourists offer their hosts. The cynic in me suspects that
>
> these short-timers take home more from their slumming in the Third World than
>
> leave behind for the underprivileged they are supposed to help. There are
>
> photographs with those unfortunate enough to have been born in the wrong place.
>
> There is the cleansing of the developed-world middle-class guilt. There might
>
> even be the opportunity to use the experience on a college application or job
>
> resume (Kwa, 2007, p. 1).

The preceding passage poignantly describes several prevalent critiques of volunteer

tourism. Volunteer tourism is described as a mechanism for sustainable development and a form

of pro-poor tourism (Wearing, 2001). Within the literature, an overriding power structure exists

which assumes that volunteer tourists and volunteer tourism organizations hold similar, altruistic

motivations and values (Sin, 2010). Especially in this context, tourism occurs in places with

great inequality in wealth and power, as well as an element of unsustainability in development

processes, which is an issue that had been played down in the literature (Gonsalves, 1993;

Mowforth & Munt, 2008). Themes that actually do address the issue of power tend to be in

passing with references to ideology, discourse, colonialism, or imperialism (Mowforth & Munt,

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2008). "The relationships of power between local populations and tourists, the governments, the industry, the NGOs and the supranational institutions produce effects which reflect and promote the unequal development of visited populations and these other players in the activities of tourism" (Mowforth & Munt, 2008, p. 225). Local participation became inextricably linked to development approaches in the 1990s, and Henkel and Sirrat (2001, p. 168, as cited in Mowforth & Munt, 2008) pointed out that "it is now difficult to find a development project that does not…claim to adopt a 'participatory' approach involving 'bottom-up' planning, acknowledging the importance of 'indigenous' knowledge and claiming to 'empower' local people."

The issue of power can be linked back to a structural flaw in the concept of sustainable development and how volunteer tourism is understood as a mechanism for sustainable development. Both volunteer tourism and sustainable development are constructs of the developed world and are inherently products of developed countries' methods of development. "Yet in order for a collaboration to be true to the public interest, and to succeed, there has to be a roughly equal power equation among the stakeholders, within the context of the issues at hand" (Snow, 2001, p. 10). The manner in which collaborative partnerships are approached and framed considering inherent power structures in volunteer tourism and sustainable development is critical to successful implementation of volunteer tourism in practice.

Sustainable Development

Theory and practice regarding various approaches to sustainability have experienced a great deal of evolution, debate, and development over the past few decades, particularly when applied to a tourism context. The dominant theoretical frameworks of sustainable development and more recently sustainable livelihoods have the opportunity to inform a variety of development approaches, geographical contexts, and social situations on global to local scales.

This section examines to what capacity established frameworks of sustainable development help to inform sustainable livelihoods frameworks, and how these frameworks can be specifically applied to volunteer tourism practice and research.

Sustainable development can be viewed as the parental paradigm to sustainable tourism (Sharpley, 2002) as well as a sustainable livelihoods approach to development (Tao & Wall, 2009). A livelihoods approach is used in a tourism context in a few studies (e.g. Ashley, 2000; Gale & Selin, n.d.; Nepal, 1997; Shen, Hughey, & Simmons, 2008; Simpson, 2009; Tao & Wall, 2009), but the link between tourism and sustainable livelihoods is not currently fully understood although many people in developing countries depend on tourism for their livelihoods. Volunteer tourism is championed as a mechanism for sustainable development (Wearing, 2001), and although volunteer tourism ideologically and theoretically align with the core concepts of sustainable livelihoods, the connection between volunteer tourism and sustainable livelihoods is yet unclear theoretically or in practice. To make the link between volunteer tourism and sustainable livelihoods, we developed an adaptation of several empirically tested sustainable livelihoods frameworks to fit the context of volunteer tourism based on the basic tenets of sustainable development, sustainable tourism, and sustainable livelihoods.

Sustainable Development Contradictions and Controversy

Sustainable development has undergone a considerable amount of debate in the past few decades (Redclift, 2005). In this section, we introduce and review the history of sustainable development as a space of ongoing discourse, theoretical development, and practical implications wrought with complexities and contradictions that bring us to our standpoint in the debate, and provide possibilities for the future of sustainable development in volunteer tourism. The most widely used definition of sustainable development was put forth by the Brundtland

Report in 1987, as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p. 15). Sustainable development works toward goals of equity between people as well as between people and ecosystems and requires a long-term perspective (Tao & Wall, 2009). The widespread adoption of the concept of sustainable development has given rise to a variety of development schemes and approaches within the tourism industry, including volunteer tourism.

Sustainable development definitions, indicators, parameters, measurement tools, and applicability across varying contexts, regions, and cultures are critical aspects facing global sustainability, especially within tourism discourse. The Brundtland Report's main idea was to bring together economic development and environmental conservation. Although these concepts can be thought of as essentially different entities, the Brundtland Report refers to each as potentially coexisting concepts (Lewis, 2000). Due to the complex system that sustainable development presents, with components that do not necessarily juxtapose easily, a general absence of agreement on process and operationalizing sustainable development emerged over the years. However, a strength of sustainable development may lie in its vagueness whilst creating dialogue and development of the topic, its core components, and associated indicators (Redclift, 1987; Wall, 2007).

Moreover, sustainable development downplays the inherent inequality between developed and developing countries, specifically referring to the destruction of developing countries' natural resources and social systems to fulfill requirements of developed countries' basic needs (Escobar, 1995). This divide has been magnified as global communication and networks interact much differently than when the Brundtland Report was first brought forth, creating new and complex spatial inequalities (Redclift, 2005). The current popularity of

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volunteer tourism can be viewed as a response to increased knowledge dispersal and awareness of major global issues related to sustainable development such as globalization, international relations, or climate change (Wearing, Lyons, & Snead, 2010). In reflecting on almost two decades of sustainable development discourse since his seminal 1987 work on the contradictions of sustainable development, Redclift (2005) states, "the preoccupation with policy notwithstanding, the links between the environment, social justice and governance had become increasingly vague in sustainable development discourses, and the structural relations between power, consciousness and the environment had become blurred" (p. 7). Sustainable development discourse, theory, and practice need to be continually linked to the changing and complex issues facing our global society, including the new material realities as products of science and technology, social and political shifts in consciousness, and changing climates and ecosystems. A myriad of frameworks (Milne, 1998; Spangenberg & Valentin, 1999; Valentin & Spangeberg, 2000) have been developed over the years in order to makes sense of these complexities and contradictions and subsequently attempt to create indicators and standards for measuring sustainable development (Spangenberg, 2002). The proceeding section explores several of these frameworks and associated indicator developments.

Sustainable Development Frameworks

Several dominant theoretical frameworks of sustainable development aid in visual interpretation, indicator development, and understanding of this complex and inherently contradictory concept (Eden, Falkheden, & Malbert, 2000; Spangenberg, 2002). The evolution of these theoretical constructs reflects the evolution of sustainable development over the past few decades and will continue to evolve as our understanding of sustainable development evolves over time.

The first, commonly known as the three pillars of sustainable development, includes

environmental, socio-cultural, and economic factors represented in an overlapping and equally

partitioned Venn diagram as displayed in Figure 2.1. This representation remains the most

popular representation of sustainability, most likely due to ease of interpretation. However, the

diagram fails to include key aspects of society such as quality of life, equity, or political and
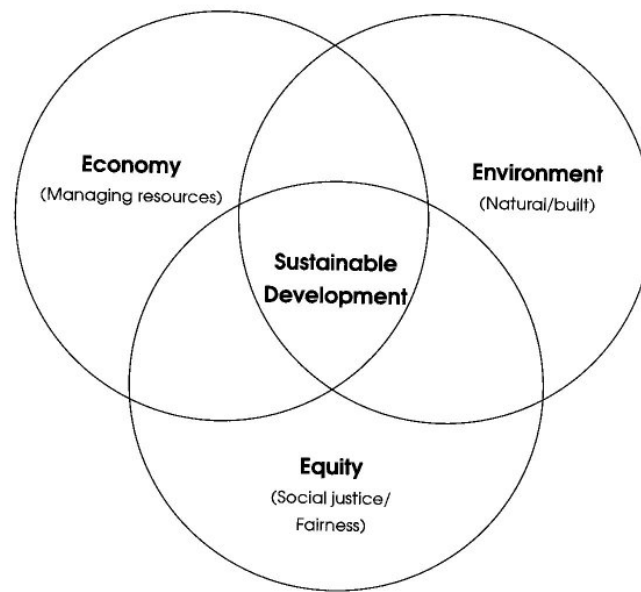
Figure 2.1. Venn diagram for sustainable development (Department Education Project, 2011).

organizational constructs. It is far from a holistic interpretation of society and its complexities.

The second framework, the prism of sustainability, was developed in response to the

three pillars, adding the important institutional aspects involved in operationalizing sustainable

development initiatives. Key to the establishment of a clear theoretical foundation for sustainable

tourism monitoring is a comprehensive framework for monitoring sustainable tourism impacts as

shown in Figure 2.2 (Spangenberg, 2002; Spangenberg & Valentin, 1999; Valentin &

Spagnenberg, 2000). The framework has been adapted as a model to investigate sustainable

tourism with associated indicators. The framework has been tested in a variety of settings

globally, including China and Europe's Protected Area Network Parks (PAN Parks) among park

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settings in Bulgaria, Finland, Poland, Romania, and Sweden (see Cottrell & Cutumisu, 2006;

Cottrell & Raadik, 2008; Cottrell, Vaske, & Shen, 2007). The fact that this framework has been

explicitly applied to tourism research perhaps limits its significance in the broader research

community and acceptance as a universal framework of sustainable development. However,

because this study focuses on volunteer tourism and ecotourism development, the application of

the framework connotes attention for this study, particularly the dimensions included in the

framework.
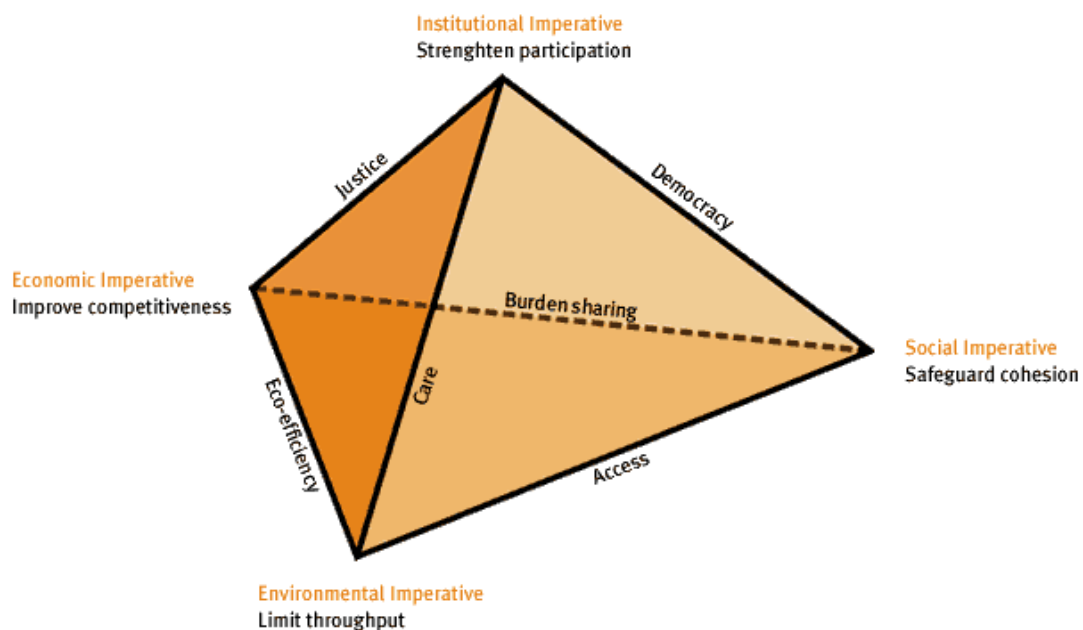
Figure 2.2. Prism of Sustainability (Spangenberg & Valentin, 1999)

Key to the framework is recognition of the connection between the classic pillars of

sustainability and institutional imperatives as a fourth dimension necessary to mediate

sustainable development efforts. The *economic* dimension recognizes human need for material

welfare and meaningful employment that is environmentally sustainable (Spangenberg &

Valentin, 1999). The *ecological* dimension aims to indefinitely preserve the integrity and

stability of ecological processes (Spangenberg & Valentin, 1999). The *social-cultural* dimension

refs to human capital and quality of life (Valentin & Spangenberg, 2000). The fourth *institutional* dimension includes crucial interpersonal processes such as communication, public involvement, regulations, and government systems (Spangenberg, 2002). The framework represents a more holistic concept of sustainable development by including interlinkages between dimensions (Valentin & Spangenberg, 2000). Sustainable livelihoods approaches recognize the importance of institutional sustainability in addition to social, economic, and environmental factors as well (DFID, 1999). This study connects the prism of sustainability and its four-dimensional framework to the more recently accepted sustainable livelihoods framework, and how the prism of sustainability can help inform a particular aspect of a sustainable livelihoods framework, and how this informs an adaptation of a sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism.

Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism

In essence, sustainable tourism seeks to minimize negative impacts and maximize positive impacts associated with tourism development. It was first discussed explicitly as sustainable tourism in the early 1990s (Weaver, 2006). Although regarded as a form of sustainable development as well as a mechanism for achieving sustainable development, sustainable tourism was initially neglected from the original conception of the Brundtland Report (Weaver, 2006). However, this was remedied at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 with the formulation of Agenda 21, recognizing tourism as a major force in development processes as both a source of positive and negative impacts on global environmental and social problems (Weaver, 2006).

Much of the literature discussing ecotourism includes a component of sustainability. Although it can be debated that ecotourism is not, in fact, sustainable, a large portion of the

literature focuses on ecotourism as a mechanism for sustainable development and lends itself as an alternative to mass tourism. Although mass tourism is not all bad and not all alternative or green or ecotourism is good (Meethan, 2005), generally they are discussed as such. Additionally, the term ecotourism has been most widely used in areas outside of academia, most commonly in marketing and public relations (Butler, 1998). Sustainable development, although highly debated, is important in understanding the new forms of tourism because many of them have a sustainability component, including volunteer tourism.

The term ecotourism has suffered long definitional debates (Blamey, 1997), but like a few components have been generally agreed upon. According to The International Ecotourism Society (2004), ecotourism is "responsible travel to natural areas which conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people." Honey (1999) builds on this, including components of low visitor impacts, support for conservation, benefits for the local population as well as their education and involvement, and respect for local culture and rights. Ceballos-Lascurain (1987) is credited for developing the first formal definition of ecotourism and described it as "travelling to relatively undisturbed or uncontaminated natural areas with the specific objective of studying, admiring, and enjoying the scenery and its wild plants and animals, as well as any existing cultural manifestations (both past and present) found in these areas" (p. 14). Blamey (1997) provides a synthesis of ecotourism definitions, while asserting that most definitions include nature-based, environmentally-educative, and sustainably managed components. Criticisms of ecotourism definitions are similar to definitional sustainable development criticisms.

Sustainable tourism is similarly complex and fraught with contradictions. In practice, it tends to focus on local, small-scale, context-specific development projects (Sharpley, 2000)

although it is most commonly theorized at the industry macro-level (Shen et al., 2008; Tao & Wall, 2009). Further, the term sustainable tourism implies that the decision to sustain tourism has been made; without tourism there is nothing to be sustained (Wall, 2007). Previous theoretical frameworks of tourism, particularly those developed in the 1980s, stressed structure over agency, painting a picture of local communities powerless to the environmental, social, and economic impacts of multinational tourism corporations and global market influences (Milne, 1998). Milne calls for a theoretical framework of sustainable tourism development that embodies the complex and dynamic aspects of tourism including global to local scales, structure and agency, our biosphere and natural resource bases. The framework should include the influences and challenges of multinational corporations, supranational organizations, national governments, local communities, and households, as well as a need to understand how each of these levels of scale view sustainable development processes. Here also lies a need to investigate how each level of scale interact among, as well as between, one other. Global and local networks are inherent to implementation of sustainable tourism development, and better understanding how they work can lead us to more sustainable tourism processes.

Moreover, sustainable tourism should be integrated into other activities and processes related to sustainable development, rather than solely relying on tourism as a primary industry (Butler, 1998; Shen et al., 2008; Tao & Wall, 2009; Wall, 2007). To assert that sustainable development could be achieved otherwise would philosophically negate the true nature of the concept, and also would be unrealistic (Butler, 1998). In moving from a holistic concept such as sustainable development to one derived from a single sector, namely tourism, it is important to consider what may be left out regarding other potential sectors for providing livelihoods (Tao & Wall, 2009). This criticism, referring to integrating other activities that involve the daily lives of

the people who live in tourism destinations, brings us to an exploration of sustainable livelihoods and how tourism may be integrated into a sustainable livelihoods framework. Moreover, "sustainable tourism development requires 'the adoption of a new social paradigm relevant to sustainable living'; herein lies what is, arguably, the greatest challenge to its achievement" (Sharpley, 2000, p. 13). A sustainable livelihoods approach recognizes that people gain their livelihoods from multiple activities, particularly in developing countries (Wall, 2007).

Sustainable Livelihoods

Because of the increase in reported negative impacts of volunteer tourism to the detriment of local communities over the past few years (Guttentag, 2009; Raymond & Hall, 2008a), reported increases in participation of volunteer tourists in increasingly diverse and wide-ranging geographical and cultural contexts and their own associated complexities (Benson, 2011), and the integrated cross-cultural nature of volunteer tourism (Raymond & Hall, 2008a; Wearing, 2001, 2004), a better understanding of livelihoods and how volunteer tourism impacts livelihood sustainability is increasing. A sustainable livelihoods approach focuses on the diverse ways that people attain their livelihoods. This is particularly relevant in poor and rural communities where people attain livelihoods through multiple activities rather than one formal job (Tao & Wall, 2009). A sustainable livelihoods approach to development generally focuses on the existing capital of local people in five capital-based assets: natural, financial, physical, human, and social (DFID, 1999; Helmore & Singh, 2001; Scoones, 1998). The approach is people-centered, dynamic, and bridge gaps between micro and macro-development activities (Simpson, 2009). Integration and assessment of sustainable livelihoods from the host community's perspective can help result in more successful project implementation and

management. An assessment of host communities' livelihood needs and wants aids in this process. Chambers and Conway (1992) define sustainable livelihoods as:

> A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base (as cited in Scoones, 1998, p. 5).

Similarly, the goal of sustainable tourism is to provide livelihood benefits to local populations and protect local cultures and environments while developing economically viable industries (Simpson, 2009). The sustainable livelihoods approach to development links the global to the local while focusing on participation, sustainability, legitimacy, democratic processes, and empowerment and strives to take into account the diverse systems, networks, and daily activities that exist in a particular community for a development scheme (Helmore & Singh, 2001). In addition to the economic, social, and environmental aspects of traditional understandings of sustainability, sustainable livelihoods includes a focus on resilience and assets people already have rather than what they might need as perceived by donors of development projects. As an alternative to the largely macro-level based sustainable development approach, "the concept of sustainable livelihoods may merit exploration as a useful, more tangible, organizing framework, particularly for work with impoverished or marginalized communities" (Wall, 2007, p. 16). A sustainable livelihoods framework provides the structure for integration of household and community-level data for collection and analysis of economic, cultural and environmental assets (Simpson, 2009). Scoones' (1998) framework, displayed in Figure 2.3, represents a means of approaching analysis of sustainable livelihoods in rural communities.

CONTEXTS, CONDITIONS AND TRENDS — LIVELIHOOD RESOURCES — INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES & ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURES — LIVELIHOOD STRATEGIES — SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD OUTCOMES

Policy

History

Politics

Macro-economic conditions

Terms of trade

Climate

Agro-ecology

Demography

Social differentiation

Natural capital

Economic/ financial capital

Human capital

Social capital

and others . . .

Institutions and Organisations

Agricultural intensification - extensification

Livelihood diversification

Migration

Livelihood

1. Increased numbers of working days created

2. Poverty reduced

3. Well-being and capabilities improved

Sustainability

4. Livelihood adaptation, vulnerability and resilience enhanced

5. Natural resource base sustainability ensured

Contextual analysis of conditions and trends and assessment of policy setting

Analysis of livelihood resources: trade-offs, combinations, sequences, trends

Analysis of institutional/organisational influences on access to livelihood resources and composition of livelihood strategy portfolio

Analysis of livelihood strategy portfolios and pathways

Analysis of outcomes and trade-offs

Figure 2.3. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Scoones, 1998)

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Sustainable livelihood goals are attained through adaptive strategies built on participation, empowerment, contemporary knowledge, technology, financial services, and improvement in government policies (DFID, 1999; Helmore & Singh, 2001; Scoones, 1998). Additionally, tourism in the context of sustainable livelihoods requires a different treatment than other productive sectors which comprise a livelihood, for example agrarian development, due to the socio-cultural and ideological differences between those who seek to develop tourism, tourists, and their local host destination counterparts (Shen et al., 2008). Tourism therefore requires a different approach to sustainable livelihoods than more traditional livelihood strategies.

Sustainable Tourism Livelihoods

Shen and colleagues (2008) adapted DFID's (1999) sustainable livelihoods framework to better fit a tourism context. Based on Spangenberg's (2002) addition of an institutional component (I) to a sustainable development framework resulting in the prism of sustainability as discussed above, an institutional element was added to the livelihoods asset base for a more complete analysis of tourism in the context of sustainable livelihoods (Shen et al., 2008).

Further, they collapsed DFID's (1999) financial and physical capital assets into a more general economic component (E), due to local residents' desire for economic benefits resulting from tourism activities. Shen and colleagues' (2008) Sustainable Livelihoods Framework for Tourism (SLFT) is displayed in Figure 2.4. Other livelihoods assets remain similar to DFID's framework, including social (S), natural (N), and human (H) capital. Sustainable livelihoods frameworks are more focused on individual and community-level livelihood processes than other sustainable development frameworks. They not only are comprised of the core components of

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sustainability, but involve vulnerability context and livelihood strategies and outcomes.

Sustainable livelihoods approaches also entail diverse sets of methodological approaches to

sustainable livelihood assessment. Sustainable livelihoods frameworks, in this way, are

considered more holistic and tangible in approach regarding indicators and measurement ability,

asserting that a livelihood is more easily defined and even quantifiable as opposed to

development (Tao & Wall, 2009).
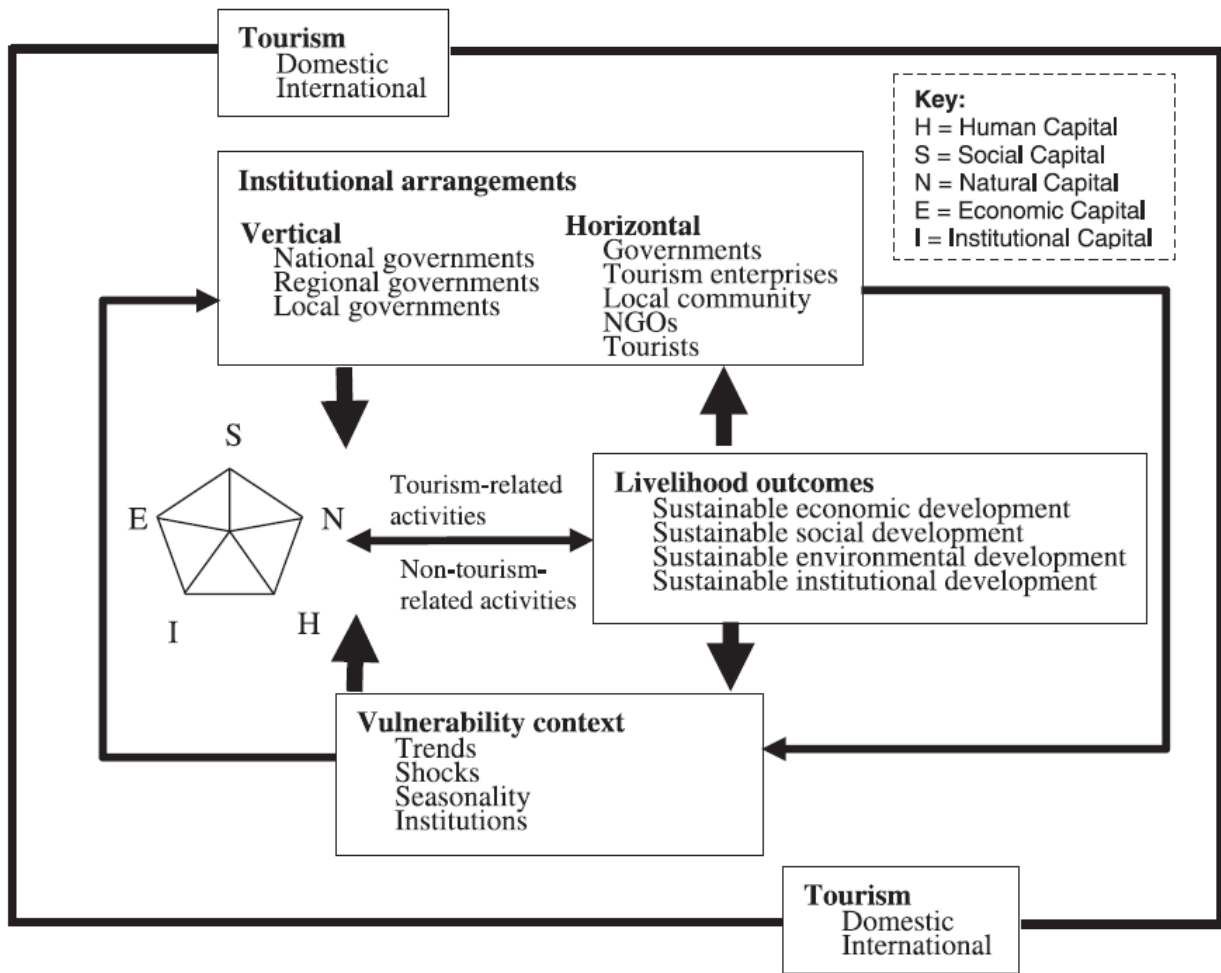
Figure 2.4. Sustainable Livelihoods Framework for Tourism (Shen et al., 2009).

A sustainable livelihoods approach for tourism requires the tourism industry to be

considered as part of a multi-sectoral composition of a livelihood (Gale & Selin, n.d.; Shen et al.,

2008; Tao & Wall, 2009; Wall, 2007). Although tourism may be a dominant economic activity in

a destination, it seldom exists in isolation of other diverse livelihood activities (Tao & Wall, 2008). "The SL approach inherently reveals the multi-sectoral character of real life, so that development work is better able to address actual problems as they exist at the local level" (Tao & Wall, 2008, p. 91). Sustainable livelihoods researchers and practitioners invest a substantial amount of time and resources in understanding the lived experiences of local populations to help develop policy and strategies to decrease vulnerability and increase resiliency of local populations, as well as build and diversify their asset bases (Gale & Selin, n.d.). Moreover, Palacios (2010) urges volunteer tourism practitioners to distance themselves from development discourse and toward a language of volunteering, specifically toward international understanding and intercultural learning.

Sustainable Livelihoods Framework for Volunteer Tourism

Early research on volunteer tourism was largely exploratory in nature, attempting to explain a rising complex global social phenomenon (Benson, 2011). Since these early descriptive works, volunteer tourism theory has undergone much development. However, theoretical and conceptual frameworks of volunteer tourism remain largely undeveloped, whether through adapting existing frameworks for a volunteer tourism context or developing new frameworks (Benson, 2011). For this study, I adapted a sustainable livelihoods framework of volunteer tourism based on Scoones (1998) and other sustainable tourism livelihoods researchers (Simpson, 2009, Tao & Wall, 2008), and it is displayed in Figure 2.5 again for easier access and reference. The structure of the framework combines an accepted sustainable livelihoods approach to development (Scoones, 1998) as well as integrating and tailoring major themes and issues within volunteer tourism literature to better understand volunteer tourism and its role in the communities where volunteer tourism projects occur. Additionally, it incorporates the

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institutional component key to the prism of sustainability. I drew from volunteer tourism

literature and include common issues and components that have proven important to the

successful function of the industry, for example an analysis of local participation in the context,

conditions, and trends.
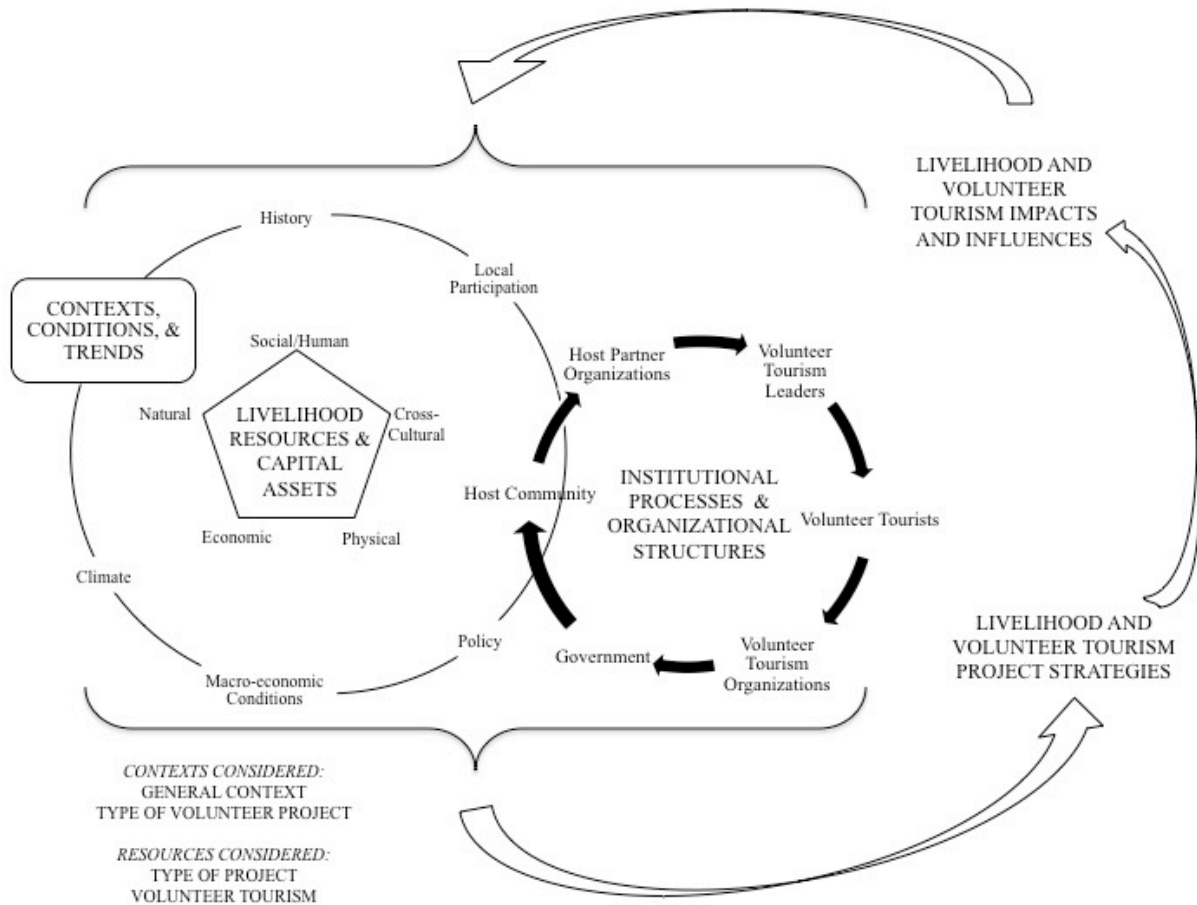
Figure 2.5. Sustainable livelihoods research framework for a volunteer tourism context adapted
from Scoones (1998) and Simpson (2007).

The framework proposed is meant to be a theoretical and practical approach to

understanding volunteer tourism in a variety of settings by organizations, researchers, and other

stakeholders interested in volunteer tourism management, particularly in communities in

developing countries. The proposed framework includes a multi-level analysis to holistically

understand the roles and process of volunteer tourism in the greater system of livelihood

sustainability in a particular host community. Adapting a sustainable livelihoods framework as a basis for volunteer tourism research is appropriate because volunteer tourism seeks to enhance various aspects of their host destinations. Looking at volunteer tourism from a sustainable livelihoods perspective leads to a better understanding of the system as a whole and how to best integrate and implement projects into the community. Additionally, volunteer tourism predominantly occurs in poor and rural communities. This focus is paralleled in sustainable livelihoods approaches.

The framework is not meant to be prescriptive, but offered as a guide to volunteer tourism researchers and practitioners when considering their own particular practices. It is also important to note that each project, partnership, and process is different and entails its own complexities and should be approached in its own way. I describe the various aspects of this framework as layers rather than research phases as each one builds upon the other to make up a holistic sustainable livelihoods approach to understanding volunteer tourism.

Context, Conditions, and Trends

Analysis of contexts, conditions, and trends entails collecting baseline data and conducting a review of literature to gain insight of the context and dynamics of the community. In this analysis, Scoones (1998) recommends including context, conditions, trends regarding history, policy, macro-economic conditions, climate, and others. Scoones leaves room for other issues and themes. To situate the framework in a volunteer tourism context, trends in volunteer tourism literature that should be considered in contextual analysis are displayed in the larger circle in Figure 2.5. Local participation in the decision making processes is perhaps the most important component of sustainable volunteer tourism projects (Eddins, 2013). In addition, a

foundational understanding of the type of development project being implemented in the community must be included, whether focused on community development, conservation, or research activities.

The dynamics of volunteer tourism previously presented in this chapter can all be considered in this layer of analysis. The dynamics of volunteer tourism in the global arena in which it is situated is an important component to understanding the entire system, whether taking a sustainable livelihoods approach to analysis or otherwise. It is similarly important to understand the context, conditions, and trends of these themes at varying levels of scale. International, national, regional, and local dynamics are included to provide a holistic understanding of the sustainable livelihoods of the community.

Livelihood Resources

The livelihood resources and capital assets and challenges of the community are analyzed as part of the larger system of contexts, conditions, and trends. Analysis of livelihood resources provides context for community and previous volunteer work accomplished. More localized context about how host community residents attain livelihoods, particularly regarding the dimensions of sustainability. In order to assess sustainable livelihoods in the context of volunteer tourism projects, an analysis of the effects of volunteer tourism in the host community must be conducted. In the sustainable livelihoods framework posed by Scoones (1998), natural, economic/financial, human, social capitals are taken into account, and leaves room for others. The capitals assessed for this study and modified to fit volunteer tourism are outline in Table 2.1.

To fit a volunteer tourism context, I added an analysis of cross-cultural capital. Cross-cultural relations are an important aspect of volunteer tourism projects (Lamoureux, 2009). In a

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sustainable livelihoods framework modified for tourism, Bennett and colleagues (2012) added

cultural capital to describe cultural practices, traditions, and cultural resources. These are

described in the context of cross-cultural capital as they are related themes in interacting with

tourists. In this study, infrastructure/ physical capacity is an important consideration due to the

community's relative inexperience with ecotourism development.

Table 2.1. *Capitals in the sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism (adapted from Bennet et al., 2012)*

Physical Capital	The infrastructure and physical buildings for tourists and housing for community members
Natural Capital	The natural resources of the area and measures of protection in place to conserve these resources
Economic Capital	The financial resources available to develop and maintain tourist activities and services
Social/Human Capital	The formal and informal social resources such as networks, partnerships, community groups, relationships that allow for and support tourism
Cross-Cultural Capital	The knowledge and awareness of hosting tourists and means and processes of maintaining cultural practices, traditions, and resources

Other potential areas to explore include employment opportunities, capacity building,

empowerment, and environmental and socio-cultural impacts (Simpson, 2009). In this layer of

the framework, volunteer tourism stakeholders learn how residents attain their livelihoods and

how previous volunteer projects may help diversify and enhance livelihood sustainability.

Focusing on volunteer tourism impacts and developing capacity rather than criticism allows

research to inform future action-based possibilities and volunteer tourism projects.

Capacity Development and Local Participation

Capacity development is a central theme in sustainable livelihoods (Simpson, 2009) and

community-based tourism discourse (Monnypenny, 2008; Moscardo, 2008). Because of this

potential confusion and the increase in importance of capacity as a central component to

community development, the next section entails a discussion of community capacity, capability,

capacity development, and capacity building to address this turn in the literature and focus of volunteer tourism in practice.

Amartya Sen proposed a new context in which inequality should be judged in designing the UNDP's Human Development Index (McGillivray, 2008). Known as the capability approach to development, Sen began to look at what people had as opposed to what they did not have, and their ability and freedom to augment those capabilities in daily life (Sen, 1990). It is clear that this idea has been translated into a sustainable livelihoods approach to development and is now echoed in discussions of capacity development and capacity building.

Capacity development is a set of "development approaches that stress facilitation and fostering the growth of social capital rather than the transfer of technical expertise" (Pratt, 2002, p. 95). This concept is particularly important for volunteer tourism researchers and practitioners. In order for volunteer tourism to distance itself from neo-colonial criticism of creating dependency of the communities on volunteer projects, communities must be the central participatory structure in defining what projects are to be completed, in what way, and how these projects may affect their daily livelihood needs (Sin, 2009). Capacity building is the ability to build on existing strengths of the community, bring forth strengths that may not have been recognized previously, and allow for the community to take control of those capabilities with a more robust sense of agency in their everyday lives and broader social context (Moscardo, 2008). In volunteer tourism, this must be achieved through a collaborative and participatory process in order to address the sustainable livelihood needs of the community and actually build community capacity (Devereux, 2008). Volunteer tourism organizations have experience implementing volunteer tourism projects in a multitude of setting and contexts, whereas host communities have knowledge of their particular differentiated situation and local context, while volunteer tourists

provide labor for projects that increase community capacity and affect the daily lives of the community members. If collaboration is involved in volunteer tourism processes, real positive change could occur. If not, how do we know the impact of volunteer tourism activities is a good one?

Volunteer tourism must mimic the stress on participation, collaboration, and negotiation with local populations, perhaps even to a greater degree due to volunteer tourists performed physical work in the community (Benson, 2011). Devereux (2008) asserted that for people in developing countries and host communities of volunteer tourism projects, there is an indication of "the importance of achieving local trust and engagement with local struggles before simply 'getting things done'" (p. 363). Community capacity should be a primary goal of volunteer tourism, alongside community development or environmental conservation projects, international understanding, and intercultural learning, in order to avoid the dependence of local populations on volunteer work.

Volunteer tourism is described as a mechanism for sustainable development and a form of pro-poor tourism (Wearing, 2001). Within the literature, an overriding power structure exists which assumes that volunteer tourists and volunteer tourism organizations hold similar, altruistic motivations and values (Sin, 2010). Especially in this context, tourism occurs in places with great inequality in wealth and power, as well as an element of unsustainability in development processes, which is an issue that had been played down in the literature (Gonsalves, 1993; Mowforth & Munt, 2008). Themes that actually do address the issue of power tend to be more in passing with references to ideology, discourse, colonialism, or imperialism (Mowforth & Munt, 2008). The issue of power can be linked back to a structural flaw in the concept of sustainable development and how volunteer tourism is understood as a mechanism for sustainable

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development. Both volunteer tourism and sustainable development are constructs of the developed world and are inherently products of developed countries' methods of development. "Yet in order for a collaboration to be true to the public interest, and to succeed, there has to be a roughly equal power equation among the stakeholders, within the context of the issues at hand" (Snow, 2001, p. 10). The manner in which collaborative partnerships are approached and framed considering inherent power structures in volunteer tourism and sustainable development is critical to sustainable community development and a sustainable livelihoods approach to volunteer tourism.

Institutional Processes and Organizational Structures

By Shen and others' (2008), Scoones' (1998), and Spangenberg's (2002) suggestions, the institutional component is vital to uncovering structural challenges and opportunities. The institutional processes and organizational structure sets the scene for the patterns and processes of rules and norms with their embedded power relations (Scoones, 1998). Scoones (1998) recommends that in a sustainable livelihoods approach, "rather than focusing solely on conventional interventions (transfer of technologies, skills, etc.), the sustainable livelihoods approach emphasises getting the institutional and organisational setting right" (p. 14). Multi-scale relations are an integral aspect of volunteer tourism in that each organization and individual stakeholder involved varies in size, level of involvement, geographic location, and in many cases economic status. Additionally, because of the involvement of a variety of stakeholders and therefore a variety of perceptions and ideas, initial establishment of institutional and organizational processes is particularly important when investigating volunteer tourism.

The cross-cultural collaborative relationship in volunteer tourism is perhaps the most important process to successful volunteer tourism projects (Lamoureux, 2009). Gaining

volunteer tourism leaders', volunteer tourism organizations', host organizations', and host communities' perspectives will allow each to collaborate and understand each other at a greater capacity. Each primary volunteer tourism stakeholder varies in context to the specific study. For example, the volunteer tourism organization may also assume the role of the host organization if locally based. The host organization may be the local government or an NGO. Each should be included for a holistic account of the collaborative process and account for each perspective. Collaboration tends to yield more cohesive and realized project goals.

This particular aspect of the framework aims to inform volunteer tourism researchers and practitioners about how to maintain partnerships and change alongside communities' dynamic livelihood needs. Better understanding collaborative processes informs the entire functionality of the sustainable livelihoods approach, and is the central component to operationalizing successful projects which enhance sustainable livelihood outcomes as a result of volunteer tourism projects.

Volunteer Tourism Partnerships

As human and natural communities become increasingly interrelated and complex, so do the way global partnerships are formed and operate at the local level (Lamoureux, 2009). Without global partnerships, local levels could otherwise become neglected resulting in miscommunication or misplaced aid (Lamoreux, 2009). In order for development projects to have successful and sustainable implementation, "the amount of planning is much more complex than for any one project, and requires a working partnership between government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and civil society" (Sachs & McArthur, 2005, p. 351). Due to the complexity and magnitude of social forces surrounding globalization, the relationship between global change and local community viability remains unclear and not fully understood (Almas & Lawrence, 2003). What we do know is that global/local interactions are changing.

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Tourism has been heavily criticized for its negative impacts, particularly in international development discourse regarding sustainable tourism development in developing countries (Mowforth & Munt, 2008). The highly fragmented tourism industry is well-known for its lack of cohesion and coordination as well (Jamal & Getz, 1995). It is necessary to increase understanding of partnerships within ecotourism and sustainable tourism, both locally and globally, in order to make better decisions and understand key players involved and how they relate to each other. This study draws particular attention to volunteering in the tourism industry as a force for achieving global sustainable development and a means of connecting global and local scales through multi-stakeholder partnerships.

Volunteer tourism partnerships are dynamic, involving multi-scale parties representing multiple geographic regions, ideologies, and goals. A large number of collaborative relationships exist in order to structure, operate, fund, manage, and implement volunteer tourism projects. Governmental agencies, NGOs, private businesses, and civil society comprise cross-sector partnerships for volunteer tourism management (Lamoureux, 2009). Additionally, private, non-profit, and public sectors within the volunteer tourism industry are becoming increasingly blurred as private tourism businesses are incorporating volunteering into the services they offer and non-profit agencies and organizations are utilizing volunteers to achieve their humanitarian and/or environmental goals. Lamoureux found intangible partner behaviors such as trust, commitment, management involvement, meaningful communication, and open sharing of information to be key components to more successful volunteer tourism projects. Collaboration helps to resolve conflict or advance shared visions which could not be adequately addressed otherwise by a single organization (Gray, 1989). Further, research shows that collaboration is necessary to address issues beyond the capacity of a single organization's efforts, such as

environmental management, poverty alleviation, or education (Buckley, 2004; Jamal & Getz, 1995; Selin, 1999; Selin & Chavez, 1995).

Much of the research conducted regarding collaborative processes and partnerships in tourism has focused on community-based tourism planning and collaboration to utilize tourism or ecotourism as a mechanism for development (e.g., Jamal & Getz, 1995; Jamal & Stronza, 2009; Reed, 1999; Stronza, 2008). Volunteer work in or around the community, however, conceptually and realistically segregates ecotourism partnerships from volunteer tourism partnerships. Volunteer tourism is implemented into the dynamics of the community not only as a form of tourism, but the tourists are actually *doing* development in and around the community and performing projects which affect the daily lives of local people beyond being toured (Devereux, 2008). Volunteer tourism partnerships are complex because of the integrated dynamic of interaction between hosts and volunteer tourists as well as the physical work being done rather than solely touring the place.

Global cross-sector collaboration between a single volunteer tourism organization, a group of volunteer tourists, host organization, local government, and a host community to achieve a specific community development or conservation project is the most common organizational structure represented in volunteer tourism literature and is frequently represented through case studies. Sammy (2008) notes, "The simplicity of the host-guest relationship that is frequently used as an analogy when explaining the community-tourist relationship does not adequately capture the complexity of the interactions that occur" (p. 76). This is especially accurate in volunteer tourism, as cross-cultural interaction is present and even necessary to accomplish volunteer projects. Joyce (2009) asserted that volunteer tourists must undergo an intensive cross-cultural learning process before their arrival to mitigate intercultural tensions,

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imperialist value judgments and designation of the other, and facilitate relationships. In her study

of cross-sector partnerships in volunteer tourism, Lamoureux (2009) stated that:

> Because of the proximity of volunteer tourists to the natural and cultural resources
>
> of a destination, it is critical that interested parties collaborate to create
>
> relationships that are financially viable and that serve to improve the
>
> environmental or cultural situation that is directly impacted by the volunteers (p.
>
> 10).

Partnerships and relationships among local communities, volunteer tourism

organizations, host organizations, and volunteer tourists are vital to successful and sustainable

development-based volunteer projects. Collaborative partnerships are not only vital to successful

development, but also to the sustainability of the daily lives of local communities and their

surrounding ecosystems, yet only recently cross-sector partnerships have been explored in a

volunteer tourism context (Lamoureux, 2009). Partnerships within development have been

contested and problematic, and mostly descriptive in nature (Biermann, Chan, Mert, & Pattberg,

2007; Selin, 1999). "Concentration of power in multinational firms may be efficient in monetary

terms but may marginalise national social justice and environmental laws" (Selin, 1999, p. 260).

Further, partnerships for development, although vital for the achievement of development

initiatives, are difficult to measure with their success resting in intangible qualities of trust,

commitment, and reciprocity (Eade, 2007; Lamoureux, 2009). Long-term partnerships are

essential to effective development (Eade, 2007; Ingram, 2011). It is imperative for all

stakeholders to understand the complexities of their own roles as well as the roles of other

stakeholders for collaboration within volunteer tourism as well as to better understand the

challenges and opportunities among these relationships.

Host Communities

Volunteer tourism activities, although carrying with them a global impact, operate at the local level. Host communities are generally situated in rural areas in developing countries, and whose residents have limited access to resources (Sin, 2010). The process in which community members are involved is less understood in volunteer tourism (Sin, 2009, 2010), however it is clear their role in operationalizing volunteer tourism on the ground is necessary to create and manage projects which suit their daily livelihoods. Local populations, host communities, and tourism destinations are commonly discussed as a whole, having similar interests, perspectives and attitudes toward tourists, cultural practices and values, and experiences (Mowforth & Munt, 2008). This, of course, is not the case. Communities are diverse and heterogeneous, which is particularly the case in Achiote, Panama. Panama is racially and ethnically diverse because of the influx of immigrants and workers for the Canal and the Canal's continued influence in the country's business practices.

The connection to the local level, most commonly in developing countries, is mediated by multiple complex organizations including governments, non-profit organizations, private corporations, and civil society creating a disconnect between global development goals and local results. Volunteers have the potential to close this gap twofold. First, they can create dialogue and rapport between developed countries' interests and goals and developing countries' local livelihoods and knowledge. Biggs, Hall, & Stoekl (2012) conducted a study of resilience of coral reef and other vulnerable tourism sectors in Thailand in the face of global change and interdependence. They recommend that local lifestyle benefits and nuances be incorporated into tourism management policy. Second, volunteer tourism stakeholders can develop relationships creating a medium for strengthening networks beyond the traditional giver and receiver,

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providing developing countries' an opportunity for better representation and voice (Devereux, 2008; Smith & Yanacopulos, 2004). In recognition of the focus of volunteer tourism research on volunteer tourists, "seldom are the voices of the members of the host community heard in these musings on volunteer tourism and even rarer is a consideration of how the underprivileged can receive the extraordinary benefits of a volunteer tourism experience" (Higgins-Desboilles & Russell-Mundine, 2008, p. 187).

Integration of local livelihoods interests are increasingly recognized as a keystone to successful and effective development projects. Volunteer tourism provides the opportunity to relate local interests into realistic and creative projects on the ground through capacity building, relationship development, and increased cross-cultural understanding. The causes of (under)development are challenged rather than the symptoms through individual action, not only while the volunteers are abroad but also when they return home aiding in increased global – local connection (Devereux, 2008; Wearing, 2001). Within the volunteer tourism industry as well as within other forms of sustainable tourism, local community participation, empowerment, and participatory learning approaches have become recognized as central to obtaining community support of tourism and that the benefits of tourism and volunteer tourism directly align with the community's needs (Brocklesby & Fisher, 2003; Cole, 2006).

Host Partner Organizations

Host organizations typically act as an intermediary between the host community and volunteer tourism organization and work most closely in the field with volunteer tourists, and can take a variety of forms including local government agencies or local grassroots organizations, and are generally considered the volunteer receiving organization. Host partner organizations may provide support and local knowledge, contacts, or insight for the sending

organization in the planning process, work as a local contact for leaders while on-site, act as an intermediary between the host community and volunteer tourism organization, and may work in the field with volunteer tourists. Keese (2011) discussed the important aspects of choosing a place to send volunteer tourists for volunteer tourism organizations, "NGOs depend on partner organizations because they provide expertise, support resources, community connections, knowledge of the social and political context, and year-round presence on the ground. Local partners know how to get work done in a place" (p. 267). They act as the intermediaries between community members, the volunteer operations, and are the primary coordinators and liaisons with the volunteer tourism leaders and participants.

Volunteer Tourism Organizations

It has become increasingly important for volunteer tourism organizations and their staff to maintain positive, trusting, and long-standing relationships with the host communities in which volunteer tourism projects are conducted. Volunteer tourism organizations are generally large NGOs, based in developed countries, and have missions similar to international development agencies. The capacities that volunteer tourism organizations seek to build are diverse and wide-ranging, including goals regarding social, political, economic, environmental, and technical aspects of local communities around the globe (Ossewaarde, Nijhof, & Heyse, 2008, in Ingram, 2011). Partnerships among volunteer tourism organizations and host communities can help hedge recent criticisms of development, as well as criticism of insufficient or incomplete projects or catering to short-term volunteer tourists, by consolidating project goals with other volunteer tourism organizations and involving the community in project decision making and management.

Volunteer tourism organizations have been criticized for their procedural and organizational structure in local contexts and their potential responsibility for the preparation of volunteers for cross-cultural interaction and representation (Coghlan, 2007; Cousins, 2007; Joyce, 2009; Raymond & Hall, 2008b). Volunteer tourism sending organizations typically depict local populations as stereotypically poor and needy, gracious to accept the help of Westerners (Garland, 2012; Huxley, 2003; Simpson, 2004). "Rather than emphasizing the importance of learning about other cultures, industry discourse downplays the challenges of navigating cultural differences, typically promising positive, unproblematic cross-cultural encounters" (Garland, 2012, p. 7). Enhancing and promoting partnerships with local communities will integrate volunteer tourism stakeholders into the broader global development community.

Volunteer Tourism Leaders

The role of volunteer leaders is being increasingly recognized as a pivotal part of the overall functioning of the industry as well as a positive experience for those involved (Coghlan, 2008; Jackson, 2011; Wearing, Lyons, & Snead, 2010). Volunteer tourism leaders are the interpretive link between host communities and volunteer tourists. They mediate experiences and bridge cultural gaps between them and enhance the mutual beneficial quality of the volunteer tourism experience. Leaders are typically employed by volunteer tourism organizations, lead volunteer tourists in the field, and work closely with host organizations and local populations. The role of the tour guide has been investigated extensively (e.g., Ap & Wong, 2001; Cohen, 1985; Lugosi & Bray, 2008; Salazar, 2005; Scherle & Nonnenmann, 2008), but is less understood in a volunteer context. Unlike their tour guide counterparts, leaders typically stay with the volunteer tourists throughout the duration of the trip. This can magnify the importance of leaders' communication skills, how they represent the host community to the volunteer

tourists and vice versa, as well as their role of social and cultural mediator. In an ecotourism context, the capacity of tour guides to make strong social ties with the host community and host organization directly affects the inclination of host communities to positively receive tourists (Jensen, 2010).

There is a great need to understand the complexities of the leadership side of volunteer tourism. Not all volunteer tourism programs have a designated on-site leader for the projects, depending on the structure of the sending organization and receiving host community. However, many sending organizations do hire or provide an on-site project leader either from the host country, the sending country, or elsewhere. The best case scenario would include a leader from the community where the project is located. The leader not only maintains and represents a vastly diverse and intricate number of roles, but is a keystone in shaping the volunteer tourists' experience (Coghlan, 2008). The leaders of volunteer tourism projects are essential to industry success serving as the primary means of communication between multi-scale partnerships.

Volunteer Tourists

Volunteer tourists primarily travel from developed countries in Europe, Australasia, and North America to developing countries in Africa, Central and South America (Wearing, 2002). They tend to pay more for their experience (Wearing, 2002), but have been found to hold wide-ranging motivations for their trip (e.g. Brown & Lehto, 2005; Campbell & Smith, 2005; Mustonen, 2007). Volunteer tourists also have a greater, more authentic understanding of the hosts than other forms of tourism (Raymond & Hall, 2008a). This greater understanding can have impacts on volunteer tourists' involvement in social movements after they return home as well (McGehee, 2002; McGehee & Santos, 2005). The inverse was found for shorter stays,

including a more superficial social relationship with the hosts and less impact on the tourist to positively change after the experience (Halpenny & Caissie, 2003).

Volunteer tourists generally spend more time in a destination, and the longer they stay there, the more comfortable and absorbed in the culture they become, accepting certain things as normal or even familiar through integration and adoption (Wearing, 2004). Through volunteer tourism experiences one can learn to rely on oneself and accept and deal with one's surroundings. This process is an important aspect in the development of the self (Wearing, 2001). Volunteer tourism provides the tourist with an opportunity to explore and engage in this self- development, a process that may happen while volunteering, but primarily occurs after the experience.

Despite this process of self-development, Gray and Campbell (2007) point out that "the 'volunteer tourist' is not a homogenous, unproblematic category" (p. 471). Moreover, the volunteer tourist, as well as the volunteer tourism experience, has been presented along a continuum most easily understood as the identity of the volunteer tourist as a tourist or, on the opposite end of the continuum, a volunteer. Similarly, this continuum has been represented through tourist types, from shallow volunteer tourists or extreme ecotourists to intermediate or deep volunteer tourists (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Weiler & Richins, 1995), or from vacation-minded tourists to volunteer-minded tourists within volunteer tourism (Brown & Lehto, 2005). Gray and Campbell (2007) describe the differences between a volunteer and a tourist through multiple stakeholders' views, including the host organization, the host families, and of course, the volunteer tourists. Most of the volunteer tourists viewed themselves as a special kind of tourist, highlighting the ethical distinction of altruism and/or work performed as key characteristics, whereas tourists primarily sight-see. However, not all volunteer tourists "see

themselves or are perceived by host organizations and communities as volunteers and/or tourists"
(Lyons, 2003, p. 5). An understanding of development helps illuminate how volunteer tourism
fits into global processes and into the key issues of development work in developing countries.

Livelihood Strategies

This layer of the framework analyzes the community's sustainable livelihood needs and
wants to help formulate viable livelihood strategies. It asks the questions of host community
residents: To what extent do volunteer tourism projects affect your livelihoods sustainability?
What would you like your lives to look like? How can volunteer projects help attain this vision?
How can we work together to make sure these goals are continually attained in the future, even if
they change? In Simpson's (2009) study of sustainable livelihoods of tourism in Africa, she
developed a systematic series of tables and matrices highlighting the most important impacts and
needs that the community identified in her fourth phase. For this research in Panama, this was
presented in a form easily understandable to multiple volunteer tourism stakeholders, particularly
the community, and presented in the various responses received about the host community's
visions and goals for the future, as well as practical recommendations for more effective
collaboration and how the volunteer tourism project can be tailed to the sustainable livelihoods
of the host community.

Sustainable Livelihood Impacts and Influences

In the final stage, the information attained in the first four stages is synthesized to help all
the parties directly and indirectly involved in volunteer tourism projects to make more informed
decisions about future projects, livelihoods, and collaborative processes. In this phase, it is
important to return to the community to share results and gain the community's feedback on how

to proceed to address their livelihood-related wants and needs and how to better collaborate with volunteer tourism organizations, leaders, and volunteer tourists. This phase is most appropriately addressed in the proposal for future research described in Chapter V. It is important to reiterate that a sustainable livelihoods approach does not inherently entail a finite beginning and end, but used as a guide for continual assessment and engagement of stakeholders involved in the sustainable livelihood strategies and processes in a particular location. This research will contribute to an integrated assessment of volunteer tourism's potential contribution to sustainable livelihoods through investigation of the entire volunteer tourism system focused on the experiences and perspectives of each stakeholder involved in the partnership, but particularly of the host community.

Sustainable Livelihoods Framework Application and Indicators

Application of a sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism will vary across context, but the participatory livelihoods-based process will remain similar. Additionally, because a sustainable livelihoods framework carries with it a diversity of methodological considerations but the participatory nature of involving local people remains, the application and measurement of sustainable livelihoods becomes more tangible and attainable than previously put forth sustainable development frameworks (Tao & Wall, 2008). The use of a sustainable livelihoods framework, however, does not necessarily ensure the holistic consideration of sustainability (Ashley & Carney, 1999). Previous research in indicator development, particularly regarding the prism of sustainability due to its proven application across contexts, should be explored in a sustainable livelihoods context and be addressed when using a sustainable livelihoods framework, as well as negotiated among stakeholders.

This framework is not meant as a panacea, but to be used as a guide to investigate volunteer tourism. Because the framework is adapted using a variety of empirically tested approaches and frameworks of sustainable development, sustainable tourism, and sustainable livelihoods in the past, the framework is proposed as a potential tool to better understand and examine volunteer tourism in research and practice. Increased understanding of lived experience and the way people assign meaning to their daily lives as well as understanding their relationships with the land will help inform volunteer work and move beyond simple development aid (Palacios, 2010). However, an understanding of development is necessary to situate volunteer tourism's history and global significance as a means of development aid.

Development

In order to properly discuss volunteer tourism, and tourism in general for that matter, it is important to discuss the historical global processes that set the stage in which volunteer tourism operates. Tourism, with its extensive global influence in practically every corner of the world, has been analyzed exhaustively within a development context (Hawkins & Mann, 2007). Unfortunately, after decades of discourse and theorizing and debate about how and if development can be achieved, consensus has not been reached. "Ideas about development still crucially frame the way in which people in the 'North' think about people in the 'South', and in many cases too, the ways in which people in poor countries think about themselves and the rest of the world" (Lewis, 2006, p. 15).

The current trend of volunteer tourism as a means of achieving development through the traditionally leisure-based activity of tourism has added a complex dimension to tourism theory and practice. Tourism in all its forms has been discussed at length as a mechanism for development. Volunteer tourism, in contrast to other forms of tourism, exists for the fundamental

purpose of development in various forms, whether community development, conservation, or scientific research projects (Wearing, 2001).

The mantra of the volunteer tourism industry has become *make a difference,* urging potential volunteer tourists to embark on a journey that will simultaneously aid in development practice as well as intercultural learning and international understanding in the form of a meaningful experience (Fee & Mdee, 2011; Ingram, 2011; Lewis, 2006; Raymond, 2008; Palacios, 2010; Wearing, 2001). Development has become fashionable thanks to volunteer tourism, as well as its trendy counterparts such as fair trade, benefit concerts, and many other development-based alternative, yet increasingly mainstream activities (Ingram, 2011). This trend can be explained, in part, by the creation of a global community sentiment, with individuals feeling simultaneously increasingly interconnected as well as disconnected from the rest of the world, both of which are effects of globalization.

With the onset of globalization, identity and constructions of social bonds have been reformulated. People feel conflicted as a result of changed relationships at different scales. In some situations, one may feel as if the world is more homogenous. In this way, a more homogenous world refers to progressive universalism and the concept of a worldwide cultural synchronization, and the second as oppressive imperialism and the idea of globalization as squashing cultural diversity (Scholte, 2005). On the other hand, the argument that we live in a more differentiated or heterogeneous world describes how people and cultures around the world have rejected the McDonaldization of globalization and tended to celebrate cultural or religious identity (Scholte, 2005). The increasing phenomenon of volunteer tourism could be explained as a response to homogenized global mass tourism in search of a more heterogeneous differentiated experience of the world (Lewis, 2006). Globalization and the ways people interact are blurring

and redefining predefined notions of community (Milne, 1998). An analysis of the complexities of volunteer tourism in response to and as a product of development processes and globalization is necessary in order to understand the theoretical and practical implications of volunteer tourism.

Development has been theorized over the years from a myriad of perspectives and philosophical camps. Thomas (2000) found three main senses of understanding development within which many of these perspectives reside. The first is as an end state of a desirable society, whether that be a vision, description, or particular measure. This view can be witnessed in our discussion of modernization theory and neoliberal economics to follow. The second understanding describes development as a historical or transformational process of social change over time. I use this method of understanding to describe development processes and how volunteer tourism has emerged from these processes in the following section. The third refers to more pragmatic development projects and efforts of improvement by various groups, governments, organizations, and social movements. This third understanding can be directly related to volunteer tourism activities and how the volunteer tourism industry understands and talks about development. A comprehensive analysis of the history of development is exhaustive and complex, and well beyond the scope of this paper. There are, however, a few important implications and basic tenets to be discussed regarding development and globalization. A basic history of development theory follows in order to provide context for where tourism and volunteer tourism stands today.

A Brief History of Development Theory

Development as we know it today was born out of the post-WWII formation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and

Development (today the World Bank) at the Bretton Woods conference (Rapley, 2002), the coinage and recognition of the Third World (Mowforth & Munt, 2008; Rapley, 2002), the replacement of the League with the United Nations (Rist, 2006), and many other global transformations after the reaffirmation of humans as equal and the need for more effective measures of ensuring global stability, alleviating global poverty, and achieving economic growth in a post-colonial, post-Nazi world. Thus, the concept of development was born out of the West, and therefore evolved from modernization theory that the poverty-stricken undeveloped Third World must be alleviated by a superior developed West (Black, 2002; Ingram, 2011; Mowforth & Munt, 2008).

Development theories reflect the political positions of their proponents (Peet & Hartwick, 2009), and modernization theory asserted a transitional, forward path to development for Third World countries. This trajectory is most commonly cited through Rostow's (1960) five-stage model of economic growth in which traditional societies ultimately advance to an age of high mass-consumption (Binns, 2002; McGillivray, 2008; Mowforth & Munt, 2008). Early stages of volunteer tourism, as we know the concept today, were born out of this period with the instatement of the Peace Corps and the recognition by the general Western population that the Third World must be helped and developed. The notion of three worlds was challenged, however, with the disintegration of the Soviet bloc following the Cold War. Hence, the Second World of the Soviet bloc fell into the European ideals of capitalism, trade, and its associated unequal power structure and terms (Ma, 1998).

Modernization theory was heavily criticized by neo-Marxist dependency theory and its world systems theory counterpart, asserting modernization as imperialist and the need for a global analysis of development processes (Klak, 2002; Mowforth & Munt, 2008). Within

dependency theory and world systems theory, a country's development processes are dependent on the economic conditions and processes occurring at the global scale. These theories were among the first to recognize globalization in their thinking about the world as an interconnected system. Because most economic decisions and rules are developed by the core (or First World), the periphery (or Third World) are powerless, exploited, dependent on the core, and provide little but raw materials for the core's industrialized nations, which in turn reinforces hegemonic superiority of the core over the periphery (Klak, 2002; McGillivray, 2008). Although dependency theory was developed decades ago, its sentiment still is discussed within volunteer tourism, as volunteer tourism's presence has the potential to create dependency on volunteers' work in local communities (Guttentag, 2009).

Dependency theory led to yet another approach to development, termed another development in the 1970s, emphasizing self-reliance of Third World countries and the need for their situation to be understood in the context of global structures of power and exploitation with an emphasis on the needs of the poor (Mowforth & Munt, 2008). This gave rise to a basic needs and social welfarist approach which led to the rise of many multinational NGOs with the goal of development aid. The role of NGOs in development has been highly criticized since this time. However, NGOs have been of increasing importance and influence in the development arena, particularly within volunteer tourism as many volunteer tourism organizations are, in fact, NGOs (Benson, 2011; Lyons & Wearing, 2008). This era of development is discussed very little, perhaps due to its theoretical segregation of development practice and economics (Rist, 1997), as the next era of development had little focus on development at all, and focused greatly on economic growth (Mowforth & Munt, 2008).

Neoliberal economic theory, born out of the Reagan-Thatcher period in the 1980s, has dominated the way major global institutions operate economic systems for the decades since its inception. Neoliberalism is characterized by laissez-faire economic policy through free market capitalism and trickle-down economic growth (Mowforth & Munt, 2008). Neoliberalism is born out of Adam Smith's classical economics and the rational, self-interested individual and Richardo's notion of comparative advantage (Peet & Hartwick, 2009). In neoliberal economic policy, state regulation gives way to the invisible hand of the market. Neoliberal economics paved the way for globalization as we know it today, so much so that the term globalization, in this sense, has emerged as an alternative word for development (Mowforth & Munt, 2008).

Further, the stage of development theory after neoliberalism was the age of sustainable development in the 1990s. Sustainable development will be discussed later in this chapter, as volunteer tourism is viewed as a form of sustainable tourism and an agent of sustainable development (Wearing, 2001). Top-down strategies to economic growth and development emerging from neoliberal principles have since witnessed strong counter-movements citing widening gaps in global wealth distribution, increasing global poverty, and environmental destruction as a result of multinational corporations' exploitation of developing countries' labor resources and natural capital. "The 'normal' functioning of society is fraught with contradictions because social needs are unmet due to the logic of private profitability and because exploitation is the source of growth" (Alford & Friedland, 1985, p. 272).

In referring to corporations' influence in the tourism industry as a result of modernization theory and neoliberal economic policy as applied to tourism development, "it is unclear how tourism can contribute to the specific elements of the 'good life' as an inherent object of sustainable development" (Sharpley, 2002, p. 11). Moreover, the reluctance of major bilateral

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global institutions like the World Bank and United Nations to divorce themselves from

neoliberal economic growth and globalization as a form of development is reflected, yet

seemingly masked, in their support of the oxymoron of sustainable development and other pro-

poor alternative forms of development (Kiely, 1998; Mowforth & Munt, 2008). This is perhaps

most readily witnessed in the UN's Millennium Development Goals put forth at the turn of the

century. When discussing the UN and World Bank's role in development, Lewis (2006) asserted,

"for some observers, a neo-liberal consensus around economic globalisation and a belief in the

transformative power of markets to reduce poverty has now begun to replace development as the

dominant idea that informs change" (p. 16). The attempts of globalization processes to produce

and affect local results can easily be reflected in the tourism industry, and more specifically

volunteer tourism.

Globalization and the Global-Local Nexus of Volunteer Tourism

From the tourism perspective, globalization is most commonly discussed in its most

recent stage, referring specifically to time-space compression. Time-space compression refers to

aspects of globalization's impact at the local level including technological advances in

communication and information dispersal, trade, and power relations' influence the local level

(Lyons & Wearing, 2008). Because of this, tourism must be viewed through interactions between

exogenous global market forces and endogenous local residents and organizations (Milne, 1998).

Due to the complexity and magnitude of social forces surrounding globalization coupled with the

difficulties and issues in generalizing these, the relationship between global change and local

community viability remains unclear and not fully understood (Almas & Lawrence, 2003). What

we do know is that global/local interactions are changing. The nature of volunteer tourism

connects global and local scales, leading to the importance of collaboration in order to bridge the

global to local, and local to global through diverse networks based on trust and cross-cultural understanding. Here, it is important to understand the link between global and local scales within volunteer tourism as a mechanism for development.

Development theory can be characterized as a series of binary debates between the assertion of classical, neo-classical, and neoliberal economic policy as the superior driver of economic growth in one camp, and Marxist, poststructuralist, postmodern criticism on the other. Although many ideological and philosophical dissents exist that may overlap or intersect with these views of development, globalization, and economic theory, they seem to characterize the underlying structure and nature of debates which have been held at least since the post-WWII inception of the concept of development.

The same is witnessed in tourism debates. On the one hand, tourism can be viewed as supporting economic growth, job creation, infrastructure development, foreign investment, and economic opportunity for developing countries (UNWTO, 2007). On the other, the tourism industry has been heavily criticized for its negative impacts including environmental destruction, power struggle and cause of conflict, cultural identity challenges of destination communities, interruptions to the daily life of destination communities, and disillusionment resulting from the failure of tourism to live up to its promises of job creation and economic growth (Moscardo, 2005). In a tourism context, major proponents of neoliberal economic growth and globalization tend to be corporate mass tourism operators and champion new technologies within the tourism industry, for example cruise ships and all-inclusive resorts. From a critical perspective, this kind of globalization further polarizes the world through global wealth and resources distribution inequality (Scholte, 2005). Additionally, as a result of increased power of major corporations in tourism and many other industries, the state is no longer the governing body (Fligstein, 2001);

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therefore volunteer tourism organizations may assume a role in governing and implementing

sustainable and alternative means of travel and proper development practices along the way. In

response to traditionally criticized consumptive and destructive mass tourism, alternative forms

of tourism have been described as the "shift in focus from the wellbeing of the tourism industry

to the wellbeing of the host community" (Weaver, 1998, p. 31) and typically are portrayed in the

form of an NGO.

Volunteer tourism is not without its own debates and criticism regarding its role in

development processes, power, exploitation, and class. In fact, it has be described both as a

means of mitigating globalization's impact on local communities (Lewis, 2006), as well as a

form of exploitative neo-colonialism (Raymond & Hall, 2008a). Volunteer tourism can be

viewed as an extension of modernization theory and neoliberal economic forces, with volunteers

transferring technical development expertise to aid in Third World advancement and trajectory

toward development. Some forms of volunteer tourism organizations may actually mimic or

represent a form of neo-colonialism or imperialism, while reinforcing existing stereotypes and

power inequalities (Raymond & Hall, 2008a). Volunteer tourism's goal of alleviating poverty

and mitigating environmental degradation is continually juxtaposed with the processes in which

volunteer tourism occurs, referring to little involvement of local populations in the process and

little real impact of the volunteer projects' development-based goals (Guttentag, 2009).

Volunteer tourism can be viewed as a non-market mechanism in direct to response the

negative effects of globalization, and "can raise awareness of, and a commitment to, combating

existing power relations and deep-seated causes of poverty, injustice, and unsustainable

development" (Devereux, 2008, p. 358). Volunteer tourism in this way is portrayed as a response

to global capitalist exploitation. It connects the local level to the global through individual cross-

cultural interaction and through aid in community development or conservation-based projects. As a result of increased intercultural learning and international understanding, volunteer tourists' involvement in social movements and networking has been found to increase after their return home which may aid in change in neoliberal global processes (McGehee, 2002).

Whether volunteer tourism is portrayed as an extension of neo-colonialism and neoliberalist views of development or as a viable alternative to the neoliberal market systems, it is clear that volunteer tourism is an increasing global phenomenon of study and industry in practice. Volunteer tourism can potentially help to subside the critiques of failing to challenge existing neoliberal financial and economic systems which lack importance of social (e.g. quality of life) and environmental (e.g. biodiversity) factors when assessing value of development projects. It is important to understand the dynamics and nuance in which it operates. Whether positive or negative in impact, sustainable or unsustainable, volunteers are making a difference to host communities' social fabric, economic vitality, and ecological systems throughout the world. Because of these impacts, a discussion of capacity development, community development, and sustainable development must be included in volunteer tourism research and practice.

Community Development

The term community development is used to describe a variety of volunteer activities within the practice of volunteer tourism in order to build community capacity, whether it be building a school in Namibia or helping to develop a cocoa cooperative in the Dominican Republic. Colorado State University student volunteers built a museum and community center in Achiote, Panama several years ago. Within volunteer tourism, volunteer tourists *perform* community development projects, rather than community development being understood as a

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more holistic process involving networks of people working together to further common beliefs as outlined by Stoesz and colleagues (1999). Community development is commonly cited as a key component and outcome of volunteer tourism projects, and it is important to understand just exactly what this means within community development discourse so it can properly be implemented on the ground through volunteer tourism. Moreover, capacity building and capacity development are of growing discussion within the literature as key components to sustainable communities as well as community-based tourism initiatives (Moscardo, 2008).

To begin a discussion of community development as an alternative, bottom-up, grassroots approach to development, it is important to distinguish between *the community*, which is understood as people in a similar geographic locale, and *community* which entails the social interactions between people including intimacy, moral obligations, cohesion, and continuity through time (Milne, 1998). In this understanding, community always entails the collective identity or collective concerns that define a community, whether that be common interest in economic, social, political, religious, educational, or any other aspect of society that may band people together (Stoesz, Luzzeta, & Lusk, 1999). Globalization and the ways people interact are blurring and redefining predefined notions of community (Milne, 1998). Because of the widely contested, historically changing, and nebulous nature of the idea of community and by association, community development (Shaw, 2007), an analysis of the evolution of the concept of community development follows in order to historically and theoretically situate it into present context and how volunteer tourism may or may not fit into community development discourse and practice.

Community development has experienced minor shifts in terminology and ideology over time, but the basic tenets have remained roughly consistent. Sanders (1970) founded the dynamic

nuances of community development, which has been confirmed are still in place today. Sanders

defined community development as a process, method, program, and movement. As a *process*,

community development redefines and democratizes decision making by putting it in the hands

of whole populations rather than select elites. As a *method*, it is a set of procedures to reach a

commonly defined goal. As a *program*, community development refers to the ways in which the

method is operationalized. Finally, as a *movement*, community development is defined as people

coming together on moral bases. This final definition of community development is the only one

of the four that loses neutrality by introducing philosophical, potentially emotional, and

subjective components, rather than a more scientific approach to understanding community

development (Stoesz et al., 1999). Volunteer tourism's aim of alleviating poverty and conserving

natural resources also aligns with this moral turn in community development. A key component

in all of these definitions, however, is change. Adding this element leads community

development to become a political activity, and is no longer neutral or scientific (Stoesz et al.,

1999).

Community development language has been utilized by diverse organizations,

governments, and networks, although not always in the context of the protection of ecological

and cultural diversity. The way we think about community development in regard to terminology

has taken a number of historical turns (Stoesz et al., 1999) and has been criticized recently for

legitimizing the advancement of various interests and purposes (Shaw, 2007). "It is not just that

the term has been used ambiguously, it has been contested, fought over and appropriated for

different uses and interests to justify different politics, policies, and practices" (Mayo, 1994, p.

48). The first accounts of community development are discussed in the context of peasant

societies and their systems of reciprocity (Stoesz et al., 1999). Community development has also

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been witnessed in various forms within a religious context across space and time. Post-WWII, community development was implemented as help for countries emerging from colonialism which can be echoed in our discussion of the beginning stages of development as we know it today.

In the 1960s, it took the form of participatory development and civil rights, and in the 1980s as a response to the decline of the state and imposition of neoliberal economic policy and the encouragement of private corporations to assume the role of community development. Over these decades, globalization was becoming a much clearer reality and beginning to blur the traditionally understood notion of community and community development as a result. It seems another turn has been made since the late 20th Century toward community capacity building and community development, particularly in tourism and community-based tourism discourse.

The basic elements of community development, philosophical and structural elements, align with the basic elements of sustainable livelihoods. The philosophical element of community development refers to personal values such as hope, equity, improvement, and social justice (Stoesz et al., 1999), all of which are key factors in a sustainable livelihoods framework (Simpson, 2007). The structural element refers to organizational aspects of community development such as leadership, planning, resource access and allocation, and management (Stoesz et al., 1999). The structural component infers the collaborative nature of community development. Shaw (2007) adds agency as a key element in community development alongside the structural component. "The role of community development must surely be to enhance agency, but this necessitates an understanding of power and how it mediates and controls" (p. 27). In order for community development theory to be translated into practice, common

philosophical goals are needed in order for people to collaborate, which requires organization and structure, which must allow for an enhanced sense of agency.

Conclusion

Volunteer tourism is increasing volume and contexts. Collaboration, particularly with host communities, is a key component needed to achieve the protection of ecological and cultural diversity (Reed, 1999). Collaboration and participation of local communities in emergent tourism settings, of which volunteer tourism can be considered, is embedded in the complexity and dynamic global-nexus presented in this chapter. According to Jamal and Getz (1995), emergent tourism settings are characterized by "the presence of numerous organizations [and] lack a well-defined inter-organizational process" (p. 196). The merging of these dynamics and how I intend to achieve them within the sustainable livelihoods framework of my study are discussed in detail in the next chapter.

By presenting volunteer tourism in the context of sustainable livelihoods, a goal for this research is to fill a conceptual and theoretical gap on the assessment of volunteer tourism. The hope for this research is that volunteer tourism practitioners and researchers adapt a similar framework for assessment of their own projects, which affect the sustainability of livelihoods in communities around the world. The next chapter describes the reasoning for the methodological approach I used and the processes I followed to operationalize the framework in this study.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

For this study, I integrated several qualitative research approaches for data collection and analysis. I drew on the methods used by sustainable livelihoods academics (Scoones, 1998), those who used sustainable livelihoods approaches to study tourism (Ashley, 2000; Simpson, 2009; Shen, Hughey, & Simmons, 2008; Tao & Wall, 2009), and several volunteer tourism academics (Raymond & Hall, 2008a, 2008b). I utilized appreciative research techniques for the interview process to support collaborative and positively framed research to help build trust and relationships with the participants (see Carter, 2006; Michael, 2005; Raymond & Hall, 2008b). I employed narrative research techniques as a tool for analysis, writing, and representation of my findings to detail lived experience (see Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). I drew ideas and insight from both approaches, appreciative and narrative, to represent multiple cultures and multiple scales in multiple contexts.

For collecting data, I employed a variety of associated methods including in-depth interviews, a focus group, participant observation, meetings, presentations, informal conversations, and field notes in an attempt to gain a broad and varied understanding of the situation with the time and resources allotted for the research. I paid particular attention to studies conducted in rural areas that focus on the impacts and perspectives of local populations in ecotourism, such as Belsky's (2004) use of participant observation and in depth interviewing. Additionally, I chose them specifically to help address the sustainable livelihoods framework I have adapted for this particular study of volunteer tourism and the collaborative relationships involved in ecotourism development in Achiote, Panama. In conducting this research, I attempt a merging of theory, practice, methodology, and methods. Finegold, Holland, and Lingham (2002)

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enact appreciative inquiry and affirm its potential for sustainable community development. They affirm the need of collaborative and appreciative relationships and networks:

> If we are to unleash the capacity of communities to create their desired future, we need to invite vibrant discourse among multiple stakeholders, while supporting and enhancing the network of relationships strengthening the fabric of the community and its ability to get things done (p. 236).

I carefully chose the methodology and subsequent methods for this study to reflect the ontological and epistemological aspects of the dominant themes and associated paradigms of my research. It is only natural that I draw on multiple methodological approaches for aid in this process. As Ellingson (2011) asserted about choosing a qualitative research approach, "I go beyond supporting multiple methods research strategies to advocate the use of multiple methods of analysis and representation that span artistic and scientific epistemologies, or ways of knowing" (p. 595).

In this chapter, I begin with a background to qualitative research. I situate qualitative research in tourism and discuss the ontological, epistemological, and methodological considerations when performing qualitative research in tourism. I introduce the methodological framework of the study – an appreciative approach to interviewing and narrative research – and how my methods were chosen for data analysis and written representation of the data collected. A section on data analysis outlines the process of how I converted the data collected into stories and written representation. This description includes the organization of themes and ideas through coding using the holistic-content perspective of data analysis. I conclude the chapter

with issues associated with cross-cultural qualitative research, such as trustworthiness, ethical and political considerations, reflexivity, and third space.

Research Design and Rationale

A thorough understanding of the researcher's ontological, epistemological, and methodological issues and approaches are particularly important in tourism studies because of the field's cross-cultural, international nature (Hollinshead, 2004). The researcher's choice of qualitative method and inquiry is more than just that of application and technique. "The choice of qualitative research instrument ought to be seen not simply as a methods-level matter of technical accuracy, but as a critical skill of applied philosophical awareness and applied critical theory" (Hollinshead, 2004, p. 64). I have chosen qualitative methods for this research because of the complexity and dynamic nature of the topic, the need to access personal perspectives and opinions, and the lack of existing empirical research in volunteer tourism.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive naturalistic approach to its subject matter…qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use of and collection of a variety of empirical materials…that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2).

Qualitative research in the social sciences has experienced great change and progress in the past few decades. "In the 1970s and 1980s, postmodernists, poststructuralists, and feminists

challenged us to contemplate how social science may be closer to literature than physics" (Ellis & Bochner, 1996, p. 18). The blurred lines between art and science have been debated in narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), ethnography (Jackson, 1989), autobiographical understanding (Freeman, 2007), autoethnography (Ellis, 1999, 2004), and other forms of qualitative research. The research methodologies listed above employ both art and science as integral and important aspects of the research produced. Referring to the many possible approaches to qualitative research, Coffey and Atkinson (1996) assert "what links all the approaches is a central concern with transforming and interpreting qualitative data – in a rigorous and scholarly way – in order to capture the complexities of the social worlds we seek to understand" (p. 3).

In the late 1980s, qualitative research experienced an era now termed the crisis of representation (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Researchers wrestled with how to represent themselves and their participants through their research, and called for reflexivity in issues of gender, race, and class. Qualitative research stems from postmodernism (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) asserting that no one voice, perspective, discourse, theory, or method is universal or has a supreme authority in our knowledge base (Richardson, 1991). Postmodernism doubts previous paradigms, particularly the notion that objective understanding of our world can never be achieved. In this regard, the methodology chosen for this research mimic a postmodern sentiment and approach to research.

Qualitative research is continually being reformulated as new and innovative ways of understanding the world and various phenomena arise. There is no distinct set of methods that define qualitative research, nor is there a distinct paradigm that solely informs qualitative research. Qualitative research is multi- and inter-disciplinary and cuts across philosophical

boundaries. It employs a wide variety of interconnected empirical methods attempting to make meaning of people's lives and experiences in order to better understand the phenomena of interest to the researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Interpretivist Qualitative Research and Social Constructionism

Interpretivist qualitative researchers focus on quality and richness of the data and the means of acquiring the data (Decrop, 2004). In the interpretivist paradigm, "rather than arguing that the only qualified researcher is capable of knowledge production, they consider that the complex social world can be understood only from the point of view of those who operate within it" (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004, p. 35). They recognize that the relationships formed in qualitative research are interactive and cooperative. Interpretivist researchers portray the meaning about the experiences under study by creating coherence through providing the reader with a vivid picture (Garman, 2006). "Unlike researchers who claim specific relations of cause and effect or statistical correlations through analysis of data, interpretive researchers persuade by reason" (Garman, 2006, p. 7). Interpretivists recognize that as humans, we construct our own realities and search for deeper understandings through subjective and intersubjective exchanges with study participants (Garman, 2006).

Each major concept introduced in this document is socially constructed, meaning they are products who developed them, how they are discussed and operationalized, and whose interests they ultimately serve. This is perhaps most readily apparent in the debates of development theory and sustainable development as constructions of the West and may be used as a hegemonic tool to serve the West's interests (Mowforth & Munt, 2008; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). Additionally, appreciative inquirers and narrative inquirers assert that people construct their own sense of

reality by assigning meaning to their experiences as a result of previous experiences and social and cultural context (Clandinin & Connelly, 1990; Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, 2005). Because these concepts are socially constructed, by association my research is socially constructed and hence my biases and assumptions influence how I construct this research. I address my biases and assumptions in detail in the section in this chapter, *Fieldwork in a Faraway Place*. Nebulous, complex concepts pervade each section of this document carrying with them their respective debates regarding definition, basic concepts, issues of indicators, standards, and measurement in practice and theory. Many, if not all, can be subject to this postmodern criticism: "Doubt is cast on the myth of the autonomous, transcendental subject, and the concept of praxis is marginalized in favor of rhetorical undecidability and textual analysis of social practices" (Klincheloe & McLaren, 1994, p. 143).

Ontology, Epistemology, and Methodology

The interpretivist paradigm is to be understood as a broad philosophy which entail their own respective ontology, epistemology, and methodologies which in turn inform a specific worldview (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Ontological, epistemological, and methodological bases of research are informed by the lens of the particular paradigm employed by the researcher, and provide a holistic understanding of the researcher's perspective, the relationship between researcher and participants, and why and how data is collected. They are the bases of what is known, how we know what we know, and what we can know. A paradigm is "a basic set of beliefs that guides action, whether of the everyday garden variety or action taken in connection with a disciplined inquiry" (Guba, 1990, p. 17). For this research, I employ the interpretivist paradigm as described above. Ontology is how the world is perceived through the lens of a particular paradigm and guides how the research is conducted (Jennings, 2001). Epistemology

refers to the nature of the relationship between the researcher and who or what is being researched. Epistemological considerations were paid particular attention in the late 1980s and the crisis of representation within qualitative research discourse (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Methodology is the set of theoretical principles and framework that guide how the research is conducted (Sarantakos, 1998). Methodology is different than the methods utilized by researchers. All three – ontology, epistemology, and methodology – are the foundation of how research is conducted.

> Put simply, knowledge production relies heavily upon the ontology of the research – their definition of reality. Their epistemology – what they count as knowledge – depends on what they want to know about, while the kind of knowledge that they seek determines their methodology (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004, p. 34).

Further, methods are "the tools or instrument employed by researchers to gather empirical evidence or to analyse data" (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 32). For example, a researcher's methodology might be ethnography, whereas the methods may include interviews, observation, field notes, or a variety of other tools. Punch (1994) states that observation, interviewing, and documentary analysis are central methods in qualitative research. Belsky (2004) confirms that in tourism research, participant observation and in-depth interviewing can aid in developing context and a more holistic perspective of political dynamics of tourism activities.

Qualitative Research in Tourism

Although qualitative research has undergone incredible advancement in fields such as sociology, anthropology, and education over the past few decades, tourism researchers only

began to question the shortcomings of a quantitative, positivist research approach in their own field since the 1990s (e.g. Hollinshead, 1996; Riley, 1996; Walle, 1997). "Although tourism is an immense international business and transformative inter-social cultural phenomenon, the field of tourism studies does not appear to be advanced in its use of critical qualitative research approaches" (Hollinshead, 2004, p. 66). In fact, in an analysis of articles published in twelve peer reviewed tourism research journals from 1994 to 2004, 59% of the articles took a quantitative approach. Only 19% took a qualitative research approach (Ballantyne et al., 2009). The remainder of the articles took a mixed methods approach or were theoretical or review based.

Goodson and Phillimore (2004) note that tourism researchers have not fully explored the range of qualitative approaches that would allow them to better address issues of power and authority in interpretation as well as the multiple realities involved in lived experience. However, tourism researchers have contested the compartmentalizing of the researcher/researched, self/Other, and subject/object dichotomies (e.g. Prichard & Morgan, 2000; Wearing & Wearing, 1996, 2001). "From such a perspective, it is contended that tourists, hosts and researchers appear disembodied in much of the mainstream tourism research, and there has been little real attempt to understand individual experiences in tourism" (Goodson & Phillimore, 2004, p. 39). Galani-Moutafi (2000) suggests that an emphasis on the relationships formed in the research process could lessen the problem of researcher subjectivity in tourism research. "Some suggest that the politics of tourism are muted because tourism research has not been particularly thick with ethnographic detail on the particular people and places in which the politics are embedded" (Beslky, 2004, p. 274).

<center>**Methodological Framework**</center>

Each man matters in this world, each life and each death; the witnessing of each about himself enriches the common cultural heritage (Gusdorf, 1956/1980, p. 31).

For this research, I use the methodological framework of appreciative inquiry and narrative inquiry as approaches to research volunteer tourism in the context of sustainable livelihoods. Data collection that involves the community is recognized as a tool for international development and is one of the key components in livelihood assessment methodology (Simpson, 2009). An overriding theme exists within sustainable development, sustainable tourism, sustainable livelihoods, and particularly volunteer tourism of change for the betterment of society as a whole. I chose appreciative inquiry as part of my methodological approach because it focuses on the betterment of society. In this section, I focus on how appreciative inquiry and narrative inquiry can be particularly useful and appropriate methodologies in the context of the developing world, volunteer tourism, and this study.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative inquiry was developed in the 1980s as a response to previous shortcomings of action research as a driver of social innovation and change (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987). Based on the criticism of action research taking a problem-diagnosis-solution approach and too great of a focus on the problem and the mission to provide assistance in mitigating or solving that problem, appreciative inquiry is understood as an innovative approach to action research (Egan & Lancaster, 2005).

Appreciative Inquiry is the cooperative, coevolutionary search for the best in people, their organisations, and the world around them. It involves systematic

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discovery of what gives life to an organisation or a community when it is most

effective and most capable in economic, ecological, and human terms

(Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p. 8).

Appreciative inquiry assumes that "the social universe is open to indefinite revision,

change, and self-propelled development" (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987, p. 131). Although

most commonly described as a methodology, appreciative inquiry has been understood as a

theory, process, field of knowledge, philosophy, or even a worldview due to its specific approach

to research (Raymond & Hall, 2008).

Appreciative inquiry strives to seek out the best of what already exists to bolster the

collective imagination of a group of interrelated individuals and envision possibility of the future

(CRWRC, 1997). Its goal is to generate knowledge through positively framed inquiry and action,

which may not have been previously recognized by the participants. Appreciative inquiry aims to

create a realm of possibility and vision among participants for a collectively desired future, and

translate those possibilities into action and practice through positively changing people's

attitudes about their situation. The objective of appreciative inquiry, in contrast to action

research, is not to directly or structurally change the community, but to unveil and magnify

strengths, hopes, and dreams that already exist in order to inspire change (Raymond & Hall,

2008b).

The process appreciative inquiry researchers traverse through their research process,

coined the 4-D cycle in the 1980s, has been applied to a myriad of fields of study over the years

(Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Discovery, dream, design, and destiny comprise the four phases

for appreciative inquiry research. In the Discovery phase, appreciative interviews uncover

strengths, assets, best experiences, and successes to better understand what elements and context of what made these moments of excellence possible (Finegold et al., 2002). The Dream phase in the research process aligns with an analysis of most important community needs and wants and help to gain perspective of livelihood strategies for future volunteer tourism projects. In this phase, people explore hopes and dreams as a practical and generative process of vision and possibility (Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003). The Design stage turns its attention toward enacting change to help realize the vision (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Specifically, what needs to change in order to enable realization of our dreams? The appreciative inquiry framework is called a cycle because it is not meant to have a finite beginning and end. My research, unfortunately, has a finite beginning and end. However I hope that this appreciative and participatory research process will aid in strengthened collaborative relationships for continued future sustainable livelihood outcomes of the community.

Although I did not adhere directly to the appreciative inquiry 4-D framework for the focus of my research approach, it is important to note that there are clear similarities in themes between the phases in the appreciative inquiry framework and the themes in the sustainable livelihoods framework. The 4-D cycle can almost perfectly be overlaid onto the sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism. The sustainable livelihoods framework has been applied directly to many fields as well, including rural communities, biodiversity, and tourism. For this research, I utilized appreciative interviewing to guide my data collection process.

Appreciative Interviewing

For all of the interviews, I took an appreciative approach to interviewing. Finegold and colleagues (2002) enacted appreciative inquiry and affirm its potential for sustainable

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community development, particularly regarding the need to better understand collaborative relationships and networks. Appreciative interviewing can be framed to elicit both individual stories as well as strengths of organizations and communities (Nyaupane & Poudel, 2011). Cooperrider and Whitney (1999) discussed the importance of positively framed interview questions. "We believe the seeds of change are implicit in the first questions we ask" (p. 2). The application of appreciative inquiry theory in a practical context is demonstrated as effective for cross-cultural contexts and empowerment of interviewees (Michael, 2005; Raymond & Hall, 2008a; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

Carter (2006) and Michael (2005) explored the use of appreciative inquiry as an interview tool for research. The interview questions for this study regarding an organizational context were adapted from Michael's (2005) study of small NGOs in various regions of Africa. Michael found the list of questions to be easily adapted to diverse forms and sizes of organizations as well as across cultures, as did I for this study. Their research merits the use appreciative inquiry when framing interview questions and how the positive worldview inherent in appreciative inquiry affects the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Although not a panacea, Michael (2005) and Raymond and Hall (2008b) found that participants were able to speak more openly and were less defensive using an appreciative framework for interviewing, particularly in a development context. The positive framework of appreciative inquiry helps to mitigate power relations between researcher and participants and allows participants and researchers to develop trust and a supportive environment (Michael, 2005).

Raymond and Hall (2008a, 2008b) introduced appreciative inquiry as a methodological approach to researching volunteer tourism in rural communities. Using appreciative inquiry in a volunteer tourism context makes research enjoyable for everyone involved, and they found that

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participants and researchers alike left the process feeling hopeful and optimistic toward the future (Raymond and Hall, 2008a, 2008b). Lyons and Wearing (2008) asserted that in order to move beyond the belief that tourism operators systematically and continually dominate local host destinations through exploitation and inherent power relations, volunteer tourism researchers must change "the language of critique into a language of possibility in order to pay attention to the actualities of the everyday struggles of people" (p. 9). Appreciative inquiry researchers assume that people are self-determining, have some level of pre-existing agency to some degree in reality and to a greater degree in possibility. Researchers must tap into that possibility and bring it into the realm of reality (Reason, 1994). Within volunteer tourism or other social phenomena of interest, appreciative inquiry and appreciative interviewing provides a shift toward productivity which can empower participants by creating new beliefs regarding social, economic, or political status. The entire process informs decision making for successful volunteer tourism endeavors and is the integral component of the sustainable livelihoods framework utilized in this study.

Narrative Research

Qualitative researchers often portray analysis through stories that they collect or construct from those they are studying (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). I employed narrative techniques to help guide the written process of this research. Narrative inquiry is "the study of the ways humans experience the world" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2), and has been described as a phenomenon as well as a method (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Narrative inquiry refers to how humans, by nature, lead storied lives and construct and reconstruct stories about their lives. An assumption in narrative inquiry exists that as humans, we make sense of our experiences through creation and imposition of story structures, meaning that we choose what's important and

relevant to us from our experiences, and construct a story that reflects those important and relevant elements (Bell, 2002). As a method, narrative inquirers collect these stories and attempt to describe individual's lives and experience through written narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

> Narrative is a fundamental means of imposing order on otherwise random and disconnected events and experiences. Since narrative are embedded within discourse and give shape to experience, storytelling and self are closely linked…The pleasure of narrative is that it seamlessly translates knowing into telling about the way things really happened (Tedlock, 2011, p. 335, emphasis in original).

It is important to consider that stories as a mode of communication and connectedness between humans has held through time (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). It is also important to consider how ironic it is that the use of stories in research is just now becoming integrated into mainstream academics. The use of narrative in research has become an established and increasingly important form of inquiry over the past few decades (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Narrative inquirers reconstruct their participants' lived experiences through the use of stories, asserting the story as a fundamental aspect of recounting human experience (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007). Humans have been using stories to communicate with one another since the development of language, and therefore it is important to utilize this widely accepted and recognizable form of relaying information to communicate research to a broader audience in a more applied context outside of academia.

In narrative inquiry, there is an assumption that as humans, we make sense of our experiences through creation and imposition of story structures, meaning that we choose what is important and relevant to us from our experiences, and construct a story that reflects those important and relevant elements (Bell, 2002). Stories of lived experience cut across cultural boundaries and provide perspective on how individuals make meaning of their lives, an aspect which is particularly important for this study. This said, it is important for researchers to understand how culture informs the story structures and how different people make sense of the world (Bell, 2002) "Through narratives, we can penetrate cultural barriers, give voice to human experience, and understand human intention and action" (Larson, 1997, p. 455).

How individuals make meaning of their lives and experiences is not only important for others' understanding of each other, but also for the individuals' understanding of oneself. The researcher must therefore take care in how those stories are reconstructed in order to grasp the core essence of the person's experience. Here lies the importance of research as a collaborative process between researcher and participant. "Because collaboration occurs from beginning to end in narrative inquiry, plot outlines are continually revised as consultation takes place over written materials and as further data are collected to develop points of importance in the revise story" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 11). Appreciative co-inquiry entails learning together and requires an integrated collaborative research relationship (Schall et al., 2005).

Appreciative inquiry researchers have made extensive use of narrative storytelling as a method of discovery and communication across multiple fields and contexts of inquiry, particularly as a tool for representation and communication of experience (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999; Ludema, 2002; Michael, 2005; Schall et al., 2005). Researchers have coupled appreciative and narrative inquiry to frame individuals' experiences in a way that is relatable and

understandable to others, termed appreciative storytelling (Ludema, 2002) or appreciative narrative (Schall et al., 2004). When narrative inquiry is joined with an appreciative approach, it provides a unique opportunity to join people together through reflection and aid in the process of learning from each other's experiences and understanding how others make meaning of their own experiences (Schall et al., 2004). In order to grow and develop toward an imagined and visionary future, stories must be retold and relived in order to get a firm and realized grasp on the past (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Appreciative inquiry and narrative inquiry assert that both researchers and participants use theory derived from social constructionism as a basis for understanding participants' social situations and lived experiences. When taking both research approaches, appreciative and narrative, research is conducted as a highly subjective and collaborative process, one in which researchers and participants construct and reconstruct a social situation together in order to achieve greater understanding and change in the given situation. "The combination of these elements – narrative with a participative and appreciative stance – creates a synergy that helps us deepen our connection" with the participants, add value to their daily lives, and "create stories that generate new understanding" (Schall et al., 2004, p. 158).

Data Collection

Data for this qualitative study is comprised of 31 in-depth, unstructured interviews with representatives from each of the five stakeholders, a focus group, a community meeting and presentation in Achiote, a presentation and in-depth discussion at the national office of CEASPA, participant observation, and detailed field notes. A map of volunteer tourism stakeholders interviewed for this study is displayed in Figure 3.1. Data were collected over a 15 month period between February 2011 and April 2012. A timeline of the research process is

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displayed in Figure 3.2. Between February and June 2011 I prepared myself and my research

assistant for our time in the field. We met with people involved in Alternative Breaks and who

were familiar with Panamanian culture, history, and politics to gain context for our field

experience.
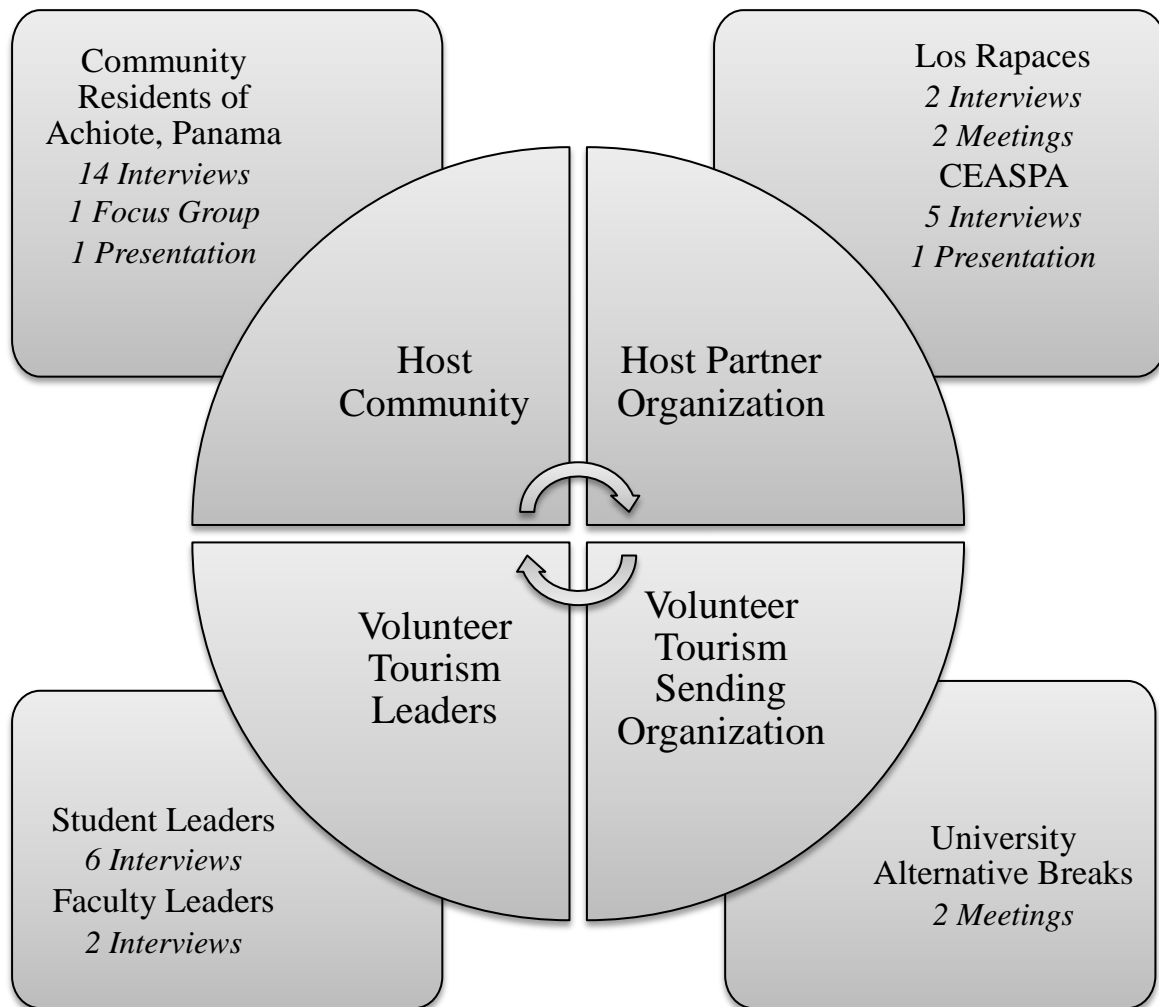
Figure 3.1. Map of interviews completed in the partnership, excluding two interviews of ecotourism professionals and two interviews of people involved in development projects in Achiote

I conducted a thorough literature review, focusing on contextual background regarding

the methodological approach and conceptual framework of the intersection between volunteer

tourism and sustainable livelihoods. My research assistant and I trained in cross-cultural

USA
February-June 2011
Field research preparation and training, review of literature

USA
July 2011-February 2012
Initial data analysis of interviews completed in Panama; Interviews with student and faculty leaders; Two supplementary interviews for context and background

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA
March 12-16, 2012
Preparation of transcripts, field notes, and presentation; Interviews at CEASPA; Interviews with ecotourism professionals

PANAMA CITY, PANAMA
March 24, 2012
Final presentation and discussion at CEASPA national office

USA
April-November, 2012
Data analysis and writing

ACHIOTE & PANAMA CITY, PANAMA
June 1-July 15, 2011
Field research including interviews, focus group, and community presentation

ACHIOTE, PANAMA
March 3-11, 2012
Participant observation; Interviews and meetings with Los Rapaces and CEASPA representatives in Achiote

ACHIOTE, PANAMA
March 17-23, 2012
Follow-up meetings and interviews with Los Rapaces and CEASPA representatives in Achiote

USA
April 2012
Follow-up interviews with 2012 student leaders

Figure 3.2. Timeline of research process.

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research, qualitative interviewing skills, and issues with doing cross-cultural research in a developing country. Throughout the preparatory time before we arrived in Panama and especially while we were there, my research assistant and I kept detailed field notes about our observations, experiences, and thoughts.

My research assistant and I traveled to Panama in June 2011 for a stay of four and a half weeks in Achiote, and one and a half weeks in Panama City. The goal of the field experience was to a) develop rapport and interview CEASPA employees, b) get to know Achiote community residents and the area for livelihood context, and c) conduct a series of interviews, a focus group, and a community meeting in Achiote. A methodologically oriented goal was the application of an appreciative approach to research interviews, focus groups, and field notes.

The first weeks were dedicated to rapport building and orientation to the community and research area. During this step and throughout the time in Panama, I identified key community members and stakeholders and selected interview participants with the help of two individuals who assumed the dual roles of gatekeepers and key informants. The first gatekeeper/key informant is the caretaker of the Centro Tucán. Lucas was born and raised in Achiote and is a CEASPA employee for his work at the Centro. His mother is both the lead woman in Los Rapaces and the manager of Restaurante Cascá. At 29 years of age, Lucas aspires to be a local government representative and is familiar with practically everyone and everything that happens in Achiote. The second gatekeeper and key informant is Juan, a CEASPA employee and the primary coordinator of CEASPA's involvement in Achiote. He shares his time between operating the bioliteracy program in the schools and working at CEASPA's national office in Panama City. He is the communication medium between Los Rapaces and the university regarding the volunteer projects. He also acted as my primary contact for logistical and

conceptual details of this research. His mother was also the government representative in Costa Abajo when negotiations for the instatement of San Lorenzo and the community involvement projects were taking place. Gatekeepers are critical when considering access and funding (Argyris, 1969). In this sense, Punch (1994) refers to gatekeepers as government agencies, corporate representatives, funding agencies, among others. In the case of this research, the gatekeepers were the stakeholders in the volunteer projects. If only one of them denied my access and acceptance to do the research, this study would not exist.

Throughout the first trip to Achiote when my research assistant was present, I completed in-depth interviews with eight community residents in education, conservation, local ecotourism and bird watching, local government, business owners, young adults and elders, subsistence farming, coffee farming, cattle farming. I conducted each interview in the home of the participant to help them feel comfortable in their own setting. Consistent with cross-cultural research strategies, I asked questions about central issues in different ways several times and had follow-up conversations after the interview in order to limit potential cross-cultural misunderstandings between myself and the interviewees (Jobbins, 2004). Many additional informal casual conversations and social interactions included people involved in infrastructure development and the amplification of the Panama Canal, clergy, parks management, taxi services, and community members that work directly and indirectly with the volunteer projects. I strived for a wide variety of people in the community to provide diverse perspectives and insights to livelihoods in the community as a whole. The intent of the interviews was to gain livelihood context and locals' perspectives of their own lives as well as the previous volunteer projects completed in their community.

The initial research plan included two focus groups with community residents that I conducted interviews with. This plan changed quickly as it was difficult to plan with the busy schedules and lives of the participants as well as the cross-cultural differences in perceptions of time in rural Latin America. It also started raining an hour before the scheduled time of the focus group. I conducted one focus group with five participants. I also originally wanted the focus group to be comprised of people that were not involved with CEASPA to avoid biased responses due to CEASPA's history of involvement in the community. What ended up happening was the focus group was comprised of the lead woman in Los Rapaces (Lucas's mother), the director of the school, Lucas, a subsistence farmer that was previously involved with Los Rapaces, and a teacher's assistant that I had not previously interviewed that happened to be at the school. I held the focus group at the school in Achiote because it is a neutral place and is centrally located. I introduced the first theme, which was what they enjoy about their lives in Achiote. I had three more themes that I wanted to specifically address, however the conversation flowed in a way that the group addressed all three on their own. They were about the environment, the changes occurring in the town and their visions for the future, and the perspectives about the student volunteers and their projects over the years.

In addition to these preliminary community interviews, I conducted three unstructured, in-depth interviews and held four meetings with the members of Los Rapaces, the local host organization and ecotourism development group. The interviews were conducted individually, with my research assistant and I present, either in the restaurant or in their homes. The meetings were held in the restaurant with the entire group present and coincided with their regular business meetings.

At the end of the six week field research experience, my research assistant and I presented our preliminary findings and thanked the participants and community residents at a community meeting in the restaurant. We made and distributed fliers throughout Achiote inviting them to attend. Approximately 40 community members attended. A few people from CEASPA even traveled from Panama City to attend. In the presentation, we shared quotes supplemented with photos we took to support the four major themes that I identified from the interviews up to that point – *La Vida Bonita en Achiote, Respeto al Ambiente, Cambios del Pasado y Esperanzas por el Futuro*, and *Los Voluntarios de la Universidad*. In English, these are The Beautiful Life in Achiote, Respect for the Environment, Changes in the Past and Hopes for the Future, and The University Volunteers. Examples of quotes we shared in the presentation are displayed in Table 3.1. We opened the presentation for questions following our presentation. We shared an emotional thank you letter at the end, which can be read in Appendix VI, and proceeded to celebrate following the presentation.

During my time in Panama City both prior to and following my stay in Achiote, several interviews were conducted with members of CEASPA who represented current and former directors, chairpersons of the board, local Achiote staff, and regional managers in areas of bioliteracy and gender equality. In the interviews with Los Rapaces and CEASPA, themes focused on their roles in the process of the volunteer projects, their involvement in the community, and their relationships, perspectives, and responsibilities to Los Rapaces and the university.

Between my return to the US in July 2011 and directly following my second trip to Panama in March 2012, I conducted a series of unstructured, in-depth interviews with six current

Table 3.1. *Examples of quotes shared by theme in community presentation in Achiote, July 11, 2011*

	English	Spanish
La Vida Bonita en Achiote	The people in Achiote are like candy.	*La gente en Achiote es como dulce.*
	Here they treat people very well and there are very beautiful relationships.	*Aquí se tratan muy bien y hay relaciones muy bonitas.*
Respeto al Ambiente	They protect the birds and nature here. Because I say, birds, because they are like the same as us. Look, the people came like the birds, live here, came here, found food, came down, relaxed, ate, and stayed…and so I say, I feel like the birds here are the same	*Se protegen las aves y la naturaleza aquí. Porque digo, aves, porque son como nosotros mismos. Mira, este gente llegaron como las aves, viven por allí, llegaron aquí, encontraron comida, se bajaron, relajaron, comieron, y se quedaron…* *…Y entonces yo digo, me sentí como las aves así mismo.*
Cambios del Pasado y Esperanzas por el Futuro	For now, thanks to God, quite a bit is conserved. The children do it, it is good. They are the hope for the future, and we support them.	*Por acá, todavía gracias a Dios, se conserva bastante, los niños lo hacen, es bueno. Ellos son la esperanza del futuro, y nosotros los apoyamos.*
Los Voluntarios de la Universidad	They share quite a bit, very good exchange. I learned quite a bit from them and they enjoyed it as well.	*Compartían bastante, muy buen intercambio. Aprendí bastante de ellos y a ellos le gusto también.*

and previous student and faculty leaders of the projects, including pre-and post-interviews with

the student leaders of the 2012 group. The goal of these interviews was to gain context of the

experiences of the leaders as well as the communication processes that occur in preparation of

and during the student volunteer projects in Achiote. I interviewed the leaders instead of the

student volunteers for several reasons. The leaders communicate most closely with CEASPA and

Los Rapaces throughout the year, many student and faculty leaders have participated on the

project previously and therefore have prior knowledge and context of the trips and area, and the leaders conduct nightly reflections with the students while in Panama.

Before my return to Panama in March 2012, I conducted interviews with two other individuals in the US involved with the institutional processes and development plans in the area, as well as the initial development and formation of the volunteer projects and partnership. These interviews helped gain international and national context of the initial processes of the partnership as well as institutional and organizational processes of development work and ecotourism in Panama. Both of these individuals are experts in protected area management and development in Latin America. Their combined professional experience and involvement in Latin American affairs exceeds fifty years.

In March 2012, I returned to Panama without my research assistant for follow-up interviews and contact with community residents, Los Rapaces, and CEASPA. Because the volunteers stay and work in the community for only one week per year, I arrived one week prior to the arrival of the volunteers for participant observation of the preparation process for the group. I traveled to Panama City during the time the Alternative Breaks group was performing their projects as per their request. While in Panama City, I prepared my final presentation for CEASPA, worked on detailed field notes, interviewed two additional people involved with CEASPA, and two ecotourism professionals based in Panama City. I returned to Achiote after the group departed for one week for the purpose of reflection, feedback, and final correspondence with Los Rapaces, other community residents, and CEASPA. On the last day of my time in Panama, I presented my findings and ideas that I had gathered up to that point at the national office of CEASPA in Panama City. Ecotourism professionals, CEASPA employees, and other Panamanians with social and environmental interests were present. The goal of the

presentation was to discuss ideas for my final write-up and how to proceed with potential volunteer tourism projects and ecotourism in Achiote and in other places around Panama.

Data Analysis

The analytic process is more like a skilled juggling act, alternately concentrating on the myriad *hows* and *whats* of everyday life…As analysis proceeds, the researcher intermittently orients to everyday realities as both the *products* of members reality-constructing procedures and as *resources* from which realities are reflexively constituted (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011, p. 347, emphasis in original).

The data analysis for this study will continue long after I type the last period of this dissertation. The analysis for this research can be described as a continuous process of reading, listening, reading, writing, recognition of links, themes, phrases, people, insights, reading transcripts, more insights, returning to the literature, listening to transcripts, connecting ideas, writing, returning to the literature, and writing. Not particularly in that order, but fairly close. Making meaning of the data collected in this study became a priority for me because of the cross-cultural depth and variety of perspectives, backgrounds, worldviews, and visions of the people that comprise this study.

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed in the original language in which they were conducted. If the interview was conducted in English, it was transcribed and analyzed in English. If the interview was conducted in Spanish, it was transcribed and analyzed in Spanish. The purpose of this was to preserve the integrity of the meaning behind what was said and voice of each participant. The passages representing the voice of the Spanish speaking participants were translated to English directly from the last stage of analysis and into the writing of this

document. The way I translated each quote from the interviews in Spanish can be found in Appendix II. My research assistant and I began transcribing the interviews in Spanish while we were in Panama. She completed the transcriptions three months after we returned. When I received them, I listened to the interviews and corrected grammatical and spelling mistakes to the best of my ability, as we are both non-native Spanish speakers and in some of the voice recordings, the background noise of rain, frogs, crickets, or passing buses was too loud to comprehend the speech.

Analysis of text in this study was performed following the holistic-content perspective for reading and interpretation of the data (Lieblich et al., 1998). I used the qualitative data analysis program NVivo 10 to aid in categorizing themes emerging from the data, or coding, because of the large amount of data and themes that emerged from the data. Coding is using words or phrases to attach meaning to and classify a text and is inherently ambiguous and subjective (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Words are heavier than numbers and allow thick description, interpretation, and contextual analysis. Miles and Huberman suggest that as analysis is furthered, codes evolve and change and develop deeper dimensionality.

I began using the holistic-content perspective as a guide (see Lieblich et al., 1998). I first conducted a preliminary open coding process of the data collected in Panama in June and July 2011, inductively allowing apparent themes and important aspects to emerge. Second, I deductively looked for emerging themes in relation to a literature review of volunteer tourism and the sustainable livelihoods framework adapted for volunteer tourism. I realized that although the exact terminology I used in my preliminary open coding, many codes directly related to the themes in volunteer tourism and sustainable livelihoods. Examples of three codes, their associated key words, and several interview quotes for the codes can be viewed in Appendix IV.

Because codes evolve, change, and increase as the coding process furthers, after coding approximately seven transcripts, I returned to the interviews that I had coded first to insure I was coding themes similarly.

During the months between our return to the US in July 2011 and my second trip to Panama in March 2012, I interviewed the student and faculty leaders and the two individuals with previous relations in the area. I transcribed these interviews almost directly after the interview, taking notes and drawing links between their responses and what I learned in Panama the previous summer. I coded these interviews. I wanted to have as much of the data coded for preliminary analysis by the time I went back to Panama in March. By doing this, I had a baseline of perspective and thought so I could best tailor my interview questions while I was there. This also helped me to avoid redundancy and take advantage of my interviews whilst in Panama.

When I returned to Panama in March 2012, I drew connections with the preliminary analysis I already conducted through field notes to help develop follow-up questions with CEASPA and Los Rapaces. For example, I wanted to know more about the preparation process of Los Rapaces and CEASPA prior to the students' arrival in Achiote. I asked them about their expectations and what they look forward to most when the students are in their community. I also focused on participant observation and preparation for the arrival of the students.

Of the second trip to Panama, I transcribed only the interviews conducted in English, which were the interviews with the ecotourism professionals in Panama City. I took detailed notes on the interviews and meetings in Spanish and transcribed excerpts that particularly resonated to me regarding the rest of the study, were rich in detail, or provided a perspective that I had not encountered in previous interviews. For example, when I interviewed the president of CEASPA, she provided a more holistic context of the work CEASPA does in Panama. She also

discussed her views of ecotourism capacity building for Los Rapaces that I had not heard in other interviews. She metaphorically described Los Rapaces as being in first grade and learning how to write. I do not believe she meant this condescendingly, comparing them to children. She meant that the very early stages of ecotourism development is like learning to write, one must to learn how to cross a 't' before being able to form a word, and learn how to form a word before completing a sentence. In short, regarding the interviews from the second round in Panama, I transcribed the interesting stuff and recorded detailed notes of the rest.

In a description of piecing together data to help conceptualize final analysis and representation in interpretive qualitative research, Garman (2006) cites her colleague Maria Piantanida's metaphor for coding:

> It was as if I had collected wonderful pebbles on the beaches I visited. I sorted them endlessly fussing to pile them by size, then by color, by shape, by beach. I felt as if I needed to use all the stones (data) for the final representation. When I freed myself from that assumption, I realized that I was actually making a mosaic and that I had to choose just the appropriate stones to make it meaningful. Then I had to describe what the mosaic would look like, but at last I was free to create it (p. 10).

Writing Up Qualitative Research

Representation through writing is the culmination of every preparatory step in the interpretive qualitative research process. It is the inventive process of accumulating knowledge and experience through text. Representing the research through final written work, however, requires conceptual rigor and elegance, although these concepts are illusive to some researchers (Garman, 2006). "The researcher may have accumulated a wealth of rich text, but only at the

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point of representation do the essence and quality of the dissertation emerge" (Garman, 2006, p. 9). The author of the text assumes the responsibility to write and represent epistemologically rigorous and convincing results (Garman, 2006).

In this research process, I move from creating a theoretical basis of understanding supported by discourse and literature, to bringing forth my ontological, epistemological, and methodological grounds for conducting and navigating a cross-cultural interpretive study, to writing and representing the data through text. Garman (2006) suggests that there are three essential texts that occur in interpretive dissertations: experiential, theoretic, and discursive texts. Each text is a portrayed of the data in various forms, but each is woven through the final representation. Experiential text allows the reader to experience context through stories of what happened in the data. "The experiential text is the author's version of reality, which requires a *standing close* language full of evocative and persuasive sensibilities" (Garman, 2006, p. 6). Through narrative representation, the author brings forth social context and problematics of the situation. She creates an interpretive reality. The second text, theoretic text, the author makes meaning of the experiences through inference and judgment of the text. Here, the interpretive researcher makes theoretical arguments and reason of the experiential texts. The third, discursive text, allows the researcher to support her writing through research conducted by other academics. Garman (2006) prefers the use of discourse to literature, stating that a review of the literature assumes a stagnant interpretation of one body of literature at one time. By referring to previous research as discourse, the researcher is then able to weave the ideas and perspectives of others throughout her writing to support multiple aspects of the study. This study uses all three texts to varying degrees to help construct the written representation of the voices, stories, experiences, and meaning accumulated for this study.

The first piece of advice Anne Lamott offers in her acclaimed book about writing, *Bird by Bird*, she stated, "The very first thing I tell my new students on the first day of a workshop is that good writing is about telling the truth. We are a species that needs and wants to understand who we are" (p. 3). I write about multiple truths in this study. I write about many people from different backgrounds, cultures, levels of education, and ways of experiencing their world. Interpretivist qualitative research is a holistic-inductive approach that focuses on understanding and interpretation (Decrop, 2004). It prefers quality and richness of data to quantity and seeks cooperative, interactive relationships between researcher and participants to objectivity and separation.

As an interpretivist researcher, I write about what I observed, recorded, transcribed, read, re-read, analyzed, and re-analyzed. I write about multiple stories, perspectives, themes, and lives. I strive to represent their experiences and encounters through writing the closest account as possible. However a True, accurate account cannot exist for several reasons. The first is simply that I am not them. I act as a vessel for their voice and experiences. I can only write what I know from them. This point leads to cross-cultural barriers in understanding, translation, and representation of the Panamanian participants in this study's experiences. It is my responsibility to write and represent through their voice and experience to the best of my ability.

Fieldwork in a Faraway Place

For decades, researchers have discussed the merits and pitfalls of academics doing qualitative field research. Some support the importance of engaging in what's going on, getting out of the classroom, and solving problems (Punch, 1994). Others warn of the political and ethical implications of field research. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) wrote about anthropology students in their journey through their PhD programs and their reflections and experience in the

field. They quote one of their student participant's thoughts on fieldwork and how it is important to be flexible as it is difficult to fully prepare for it:

> [I]t's common to find that until you get to the field you don't know what you'll be doing…I think if you're too primed to do fieldwork that can backfire, you can plod along on your own course and be less receptive to the way things are going. It is a problem with the requirement to go and immerse yourself into a society for such a long period of time, you really have to be flexible about your work, and if you're too prepared and you have too many methods you want to employ, if you've structured your time too much before you arrive, you can mess it up by not being receptive enough (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 97).

I entered this research process as a ripe, eager academic. I had much more training studying theory and writing papers than I did working in a rural Panamanian community. I was that student that was too prepared and too structured the statement above is referring to. I felt simultaneously over-prepared and underprepared. I hadn't studied Spanish in six years. I had never employed a research assistant before. I had a set plan of action for the research for my first six week journey to Achiote in the summer of 2011. I knew to expect that plans would change in the field. I had studied the importance of epistemology and creating relationships with people in the community. In performing field research, I traversed the boundaries of understanding the dynamics and potentialities of being in the field in the literature to *experiencing* what it means in the field.

This section discusses the politics and ethics of field research, particularly in a cross-cultural setting. Researcher reflexivity is an important aspect of field research to bring forth

biases, help the researcher address political and ethical issues in the field and upon return, and support credible qualitative research. The process of reflexivity and experience of field research creates a third space (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). The researcher finds herself not of her own culture and worldview or those of the place where she is researching, but a third space of understanding and knowing lodged somewhere between the two. These concepts – ethics and politics, reflexivity, and third space – are addressed in this section to bring forward important issues and potential biases qualitative researchers confront in the field and discuss issues I encountered in my own field experience.

In a training session prior to my departure about researching in the field, I learned a metaphor from a professor who has been conducting research in Kenya for many years. He explained that each time he arrived in Kenya, he immediately had to let go of his Western, academic schedules and agenda. He had to ask how the goats are first. Asking how the goats are to the nomadic Samburu signified respect and care for the individuals he works with there. I had to learn two things regarding this metaphor when I arrived in Panama. I had to learn what their version of "goats" is, and second how to most appropriately ask it. In Achiote, I learned that their "goats" are their children, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces, and neighbors. The amount of importance they place on their own relationships and families also signifies the strength and value they put on community.

I had to let go of time, schedules, and most importantly, theorizing my experiences and interactions to the point they didn't seem to be real experiences and interactions anymore. In my first weeks, I connected everything to the literature. This did not help in building relationships in the beginning. I had to let go. It took a while, but I did. I learned Spanish quickly. I learned about the families and neighbors. I learned that my relationships with the women were incredibly

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important in deciphering the relationships in the town. I learned to care, not just because it was important in the research process and that's what the journal articles told me to do, but because I actually cared.

When I returned in March 2012, I was received with open arms. I had returned, in contrast to many visitors and researchers who leave and never come back. An added dynamic to my return was that I was by myself, without the crutch of my research assistant for translation and engaging with people. I had to rely on myself. I learned colloquial Spanish faster than I thought my brain could work. I now, as I have been told by several people, speak Spanish with a Panamanian accent, a result of this research that I am rather proud of. I already had and made additional friends. It was refreshing, affirming, and exciting. I was finally a researcher integrated in the community. The most important phrase of the previous sentence is integrated into the community. No doubt there is much about Achiote that I do not know and will never know. However, I felt comfortable and safe and surrounded by people that knew me, why I was there, and offered to serve me *arroz con pulpo*, rice with octopus, every time I walked down the street. The constant invitations came to a point when I had to start declining my favorite dish so I could get down the street within an hour. Down the street is about a half mile.

The point here is that my outlook on performing field research changed. I changed from a rigid, scheduled academic with a plan to a caring, friendly academic with a flexible plan. I believe I achieved the balance of getting my work accomplished while engaging in the community. I wrote in my journal at the restaurant while I watched daily life proceed in the town. I told my key informants and partners exactly when and to what capacity I needed to be with them and interviewing. In sum, my biases and assumptions changed for my research plan as

well as my view of what it means to create relationships and partnerships in the field. I learned to ask how the goats are first.

Ethics and Politics of Cross-Cultural Field Research

Ethics and politics in cross-cultural field research are particularly important when tourism is added to the research context. Specifically, issues of power, construction of the other, and a legacy of imposing Western models of development must be addressed in qualitative tourism research in developing countries. Further, Phillimore and Goodson (2004) note that while there has been a push to include host community perspectives in qualitative tourism research, "there was a tendency for this Other to be portrayed as one monolithic group, with very little consideration of difference either within or between groups" (p. 186). As I explain in my data collection techniques below, I strived for variation in the people I interviewed for this study.

Many considerations exist in ethics and politics of qualitative field research, including relationship dynamics between the researcher and researched, confidentiality, harm, privacy and identification, access and acceptance, spoiling the field, researcher fatigue and stress, among many others (Punch, 1994). "Entry and departure, distrust and confidence, elation and despondency, commitment and betrayal, friendship and abandonment–all are fundamentals here as are dry discussions on the techniques of observation, taking field notes, analyzing the data, and writing the report" (Punch, 1994, p. 84). Politics influence every aspect of qualitative data. Punch (1994) addresses several important features of qualitative research that impact field research, but are not always clearly articulated. Researcher personality affects approach, ability in the field, and relationships made. The researcher's geographic proximity to resources and cities is an issue I dealt with personally. Although I was not completely isolated and had regular

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social contact with the community, Achiote does not have the luxury of internet, postal services, a bank, or grocery store. Punch mentions the nature of the research object as significant in terms of access and potential conflict, referring to whether the research object is a community, group, or organization. The researcher's institutional background can open or close doors. In this case, the history of CEASPA's involvement with the university and with community development in Achiote allowed me entrance to the study and to the community when I arrived.

Punch also notes the importance of the status of field workers and expectations of team research as important components to consider. Given that my research assistant and I are considered a team, the expectations regarding the research were perhaps the most apparent diversion between the two of us in the field. "In team research, leadership, supervision, discipline, morale, status, salaries, career prospects, and the intellectual division of labor can promote unexpected tensions" (Punch, 1994, p. 87). The ethics and politics of cross-cultural research were issues that I wrestled with on several levels throughout this study. First, unexpected tensions arose between my assistant and me, particularly regarding the interviews and how to carefully pose open-ended questions.

The first interviews, the ones that provide livelihood context, were very short and lacking depth. I had trouble steering the conversation in the beginning. In some of our first interviews, she was asking leading questions. I remember wanting to kick her under the table and mutter through clenched teeth, "Don't ask that! We want him to say that if he wants to on his own accord and not guided by us!" As I progressed over the weeks in my Spanish speaking ability, many people in Achiote were still accustomed to speaking directly to her and therefore bypassed me in conversation. This, I know, resulted in role confusion between us and the way the people perceived our roles for the study. Also, she has an extremely outgoing personality which was

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beneficial in creating relationships; however she overshadowed me at times. I also felt that I had to play bad cop at times. When I discussed with her that we had to start saying no to household invitations when we had set meetings or interviews, she refused and thought refusing the invitations was rude. In turn, I looked like I did not care to stay and potentially looked cross in front of our hosts when I had to be stern to leave and be on our way. The research agenda was not her priority. She was busy having a life-changing, all-expenses-paid experience in rural Panama. I should have anticipated this sentiment when potential weekend excursions were one of the first things she wanted to discuss when we arrived in Panama.

Jobbins (2004) discussed his challenges and successes when using translators in several countries in Africa, including the importance of the translators he used to be careful of tone of voice, body language, choice of words, and manner, as the translator becomes the vehicle for dialogue with the interviewee. Although I did not have a translator, working with a research assistant was similar in that she was present for every interaction and interview in Panama for the six week portion of data collection during the summer of 2011. Maintaining a positive work relationship when the two of us were working in very close proximity was difficult and stressful. We worked well together as time progressed, although these were just a few issues I had not anticipated when entering the field. As Jobbins (2004) points out, the relationship may affect the interview.

Second, when I was beginning contact with the stakeholders to ask if I could do the study in the first place, I had no personal connection with anyone. I was hanging on the hope of good-hearted people to accept my invitation to do research with them, or if they thought in a different way, *on* them. Thankfully I was received by a welcoming group of people that had been working together for years and in fact desired a study in this area. In one of my first contact emails with

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CEASPA, one of my correspondents told me that they had been looking for someone to do a research project like this in Achiote. The sentence ended in an exclamation mark. I felt the pressure mount. At that point, I was unaware of the extent of time, money, and resources they had spent on projects, community development, and building relationships in the area. I learned that later.

Third, I was informed that I was not invited to participate with the student university group on their trip the coming March 2011 by the student and faculty leaders of the group, before my time there in June and July of 2011. I understood why not. I had not participated in any of the preparatory meetings with the students, who had been meeting together since October. In this regard, they were worried about the students not understanding my role and perhaps negatively impacting their experiences. Finally, the schedule the groups keep to while in Panama is extremely full and busy. The leaders for the following year, 2012, cited the same reasons. I was not to participate on their volunteer project or be in Achiote while they were there. They were worried I would interfere. I understood and obliged.

They were also worried that because my proposal had a large portion dedicated to community involvement that my presence may impact the established relationship between CEASPA, the university, and the community. They wondered if people in the community could see me as a separated researcher not directly affiliated with CEASPA or the university, but rather as someone there to study the processes among them. I still wonder that myself. I believe this dynamic carried both positive and negative effects. The Panamanian side of the partnership – CEASPA, Los Rapaces, and Achiote residents – knew that I was a part of the same university where the student volunteers came from. They also knew that I was a researcher. Although I may not have been able to separate myself from the university, I tried to communicate this as clearly

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as possible that I was there for a different purpose, to learn about the process of volunteering, the partnership, and livelihoods in Achiote, rather than my involvement with the projects themselves.

CEASPA was enthusiastic about my arrival in June 2011. When I first arrived in Panama City and was in my first meeting with CEASPA at their national office to explain and discuss my research plan, one of the first things I was told about the community's involvement with the volunteers was the involvement with the children. Within the first half hour of my first encounter with one of the most important project partners, CEASPA, I had to disappoint them. I said that I wanted to learn about the community's involvement with the volunteers. They immediately told me that I had to interview the children in the community, that they had the most interaction and experience with the volunteers. They explained how the children are always the most excited to help with the projects, be around the volunteers, and play soccer and games with them. Three different people asked me in three different conversations if I was going to talk with the children. Unfortunately, I didn't have clearance from the Institutional Review Board to interview children. I scrambled for the words in Spanish to explain that I could not. They talked amongst each other that it was a political issue. I explained that interviewing children entailed special permission from the university in research.

Cross-cultural research requires time, commitment, cultural knowledge and sensitivity, endurance, and patience. In fact, I thought I had already ruined my relationship with my first interviewee before the interview even happened. My research assistant and I spent roughly an hour chatting and cooking and asking her about her life and family and getting to know her, and Britt went to the bathroom. At this point, I remembered only a few words in Spanish from my college courses, but I had studied the script of how to ask if I could use the recorder in the

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interview. I asked her if I could use a tape recorder when we sat down to talk about the community. She immediately declined. I panicked and said in my limited ability, "No, no, no! We're not going to use names in the study and you can tell me to change or erase anything and it's because I'm learning!" I had over-practiced my informed consent script and under-practiced my conversational Spanish.

When my research assistant returned, the damage had been done. Victoria had already put her cooking down, made her way to the living room, and sat down so we could ask her some questions. Her whole demeanor changed. Her body language indicated that she was uncomfortable. I felt terrible. My body language changed too because of this and shifted my eyes down and basically quit speaking because obviously I said it the wrong way. I knew the conversation was more important than the recorded interview. I got nervous. Almost immediately after we sat down, her youngest son had just returned from the quesería down the street, and my assistant and I had been wanting to taste the local cheese so we expressed excitement to see and try it. Victoria told us to go with Juan and get cheese. On our way back from getting the cheese, saw his aunt walking home from the bus stop and offered her a ride home. When we arrived at her house to drop her off, she insisted we come inside for coconut octopus and rice. We had not yet practiced saying no. There was no way we could quickly go back to Victoria's, and when we finally did, she was gone. I was nervous for the next time we would run into her. I was nervous around her until the day we left Achiote. As Punch (1994) states, "without adequate training and supervision, the neophyte researcher can unwittingly become an unguided projectile bringing turbulence to the field, fostering personal traumas (for researcher and researched), and even causing damage to the discipline" (p. 83). Although I believe that I had adequate training in this instance and I hope I did not cause damage to the

discipline – lesson learned – you have to ask how the goats are first, and understand what that means.

The epistemology of appreciative interviewing is predominantly discursive, based on how questions are framed in which the researcher presents a positive worldview which in turn affects the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Each person included in the research process, including the researcher, constructs reality on the basis of past experience and cultural context. Therefore, each person's perspective and story is inherently unique. Analysis of the relationship between the researcher and researched is fundamental to the research process and what can be known as a result.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity is crucial to navigating meaning in cross-cultural research (Jobbins, 2004). "Reflexivity can be regarded as the act of making oneself the object of one's own observation, in an attempt to bring to the fore the assumptions embedded in our perspectives and descriptions of the world" (Feighery, 2006, p. 269). As a product of postmodern attempts to supply a vantage point from within and attached to the phenomenon under study, the process of reflexivity allows the researcher to become self-conscious and aware of social processes (Hall, 2004). Self-reflective practice should be present in each stages of research design beginning with negotiating access and trust through to data collection, analysis, and presentation (Tracy, 2010).

Some have criticized tourism studies for production of the Other and creating distance between the researcher and the people and context of the study (Feighery, 2006; Hall, 2004; Lacey et al., 2012). Reflexivity is closely linked to the production, interpretation, and construction of the Other. Of course, reflexivity assumes a more individualist act, therefore

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lending itself to criticisms regarding the role and focus of the researched. However, reflection "is part of an admittedly imperfect desire to locate some of those links between self and action that reflexivity brings" (Hall, 2004, p. 150). Further, a deeper understanding of the participants and subject matter of the study has been found to occur when qualitative approaches are designed to place the researcher in the position of the Other and hear their subjective voice (Broad, 2001; Lacey et al., 2012; Miehls & Moffatt, 2000; Sorensen, 2003; Tucker, 2010). Tracy (2010) states that reflexivity entails interrogation of the researcher's own predicaments and asks participants for feedback. Reflexivity, therefore, requires constant navigation and situation of the researcher and the researched. It is essential in qualitative research, and particularly in tourism research where the production of giving voice to others is rooted in political and historical context of host/guest, self/Other, and tourist/toured. Introspection and focus on the researcher's actions, approaches, and links between self and Other aid in a more complete understanding of the research process and interpretation of the study (Hall, 2004).

Reflexivity is weaved throughout this study and was an important component taking field notes and representing the voices of the people in this study in writing. When I was in the field, I routinely asked my interviewees what they expected from me and what they wanted me to know. In fact, I was unexpectedly asked to reflect on my own expectations prior to my arrival in Achiote in contrast to what I found and learned. At the end of an interview, the president of Los Rapaces looked at me and said, "Emily, when you arrived in this country for the first time, what did you think you were going to find?" I told him that I wanted to enter with an open mind, but that I had written a 122 page literature review two months earlier about volunteer tourism and sustainable livelihoods. I said that I thought the community would be more separated

ideologically, and that what I found was a cohesive community with close relationships that I had not experienced before.

The act of self-reflective process is linked to representation of people, events, and processes in the study. It means that as a researcher, I insert myself into the study, and subsequently the lives of the participants, as someone with three identities: narrator, interviewer, and participant (Tierney, 1997). For decades, qualitative researchers have wrestled with the act of representing others' voices and experiences. What gives me the authority to speak for others? And how, and perhaps more importantly under what conditions, do I do that? As author of this text, I employ Eisner's (1998) perspective in that I use "the self as an instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it" (p. 34). The navigation between self-reflective experience and reflective representation of the study and participants demonstrates deliberate interpretation of the research.

Throughout the research process, I find that I cannot help but reflect. I toil over how to best translate, write, and represent the people that without whom I would not have the opportunity to write this dissertation. To me, this dissertation is written *for* them rather than about them. I'm able to provide them the voices they might have not had otherwise themselves, particularly in an international, cross-cultural capacity. I provide perspective by giving voices to everyone involved in the partnership. My hope is that they can all better understand each other and work toward a more united future in the face of great change and potential instability. I cannot know to what capacity this study will change anything. The process of reflecting on my own actions and what I write brought, and continues to bring, me closer to the context, situation, and data of this study, but most importantly the people.

By creating an enchanted sacred spot, we encourage interactions in which each

moment becomes two moments, history and memory, suspended in our

consciousness. Such double consciousness negates the control of lineal history

with its regime of cool curiosity, impersonal self-confidence, cultural

completeness, ethnic purity, and exoticism (Tedlock, 2011).

In my short nine weeks in Panama, I wouldn't describe my experience as cultural

completeness, ethnic purity, and exoticism. Possibly exoticism. Double consciousness,

definitely. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe the negotiation and movement in a three-

dimensional space as being "in the midst – located somewhere along the dimensions of time,

place, the personal, and the social" (p. 63). This space is also referred to as the third space

(Tedlock, 2011). Third space in qualitative field research can be described as the space that is

created when cultures, ideas, and perspectives merge. It is no longer a defined sense of self and

other, but the space in between. Personally, I prefer the idea of being in the midst as opposed to

referring to the navigation of culture and self as an entirely separated third space. Fieldwork

performed in a faraway place leads to new experiences, cultures, and understandings producing a

reconceptualization of reality that recognizes one cannot impose a particular worldview onto

others (Tedlock, 2011). It creates a third space the researcher must navigate. With vulnerability

and solidarity, I experienced another of life by speaking and working with others. This act has

become central to the human sciences (Tedlock, 2009, 2011).

To highlight the third space I experienced during the fieldwork for this study, I reflect on

my relationship with the two boys that lived in the home next door to the Centro Tucán. The

older brother is Miguel, 12 years, and the younger is Joel, a mere 3 years old. It was apparent to

me that both, particularly Miguel, were extremely interested in the gringa living alone next door.

Miguel watched and listened as I interviewed Lucas. I hope he learned from our discussion. I

have high hopes for the boy I learned to call my closest companion in Achiote. One of my first

days, he and Joel wandered over to the Centro during my DVD initiated yoga practice. I made

faces at them in downward dog position as they sat at the table with their chins on their fists

gawking at the gringa's strange movements. I can only imagine what their thoughts were as I

windmilled up into Warrior 2, playfully sticking my tongue out at them in my most powerful

position. One time, I blasted my favorite musical group, The String Cheese Incident, for them

and hippie danced in circles with them around the Centro. Joel loved it. Miguel had no idea what

I was doing. The bluegrass funk tunes are a far cry from Panamanian música típico with its salsa

and merengue beats that screams from every car, shop, and open front door in Achiote. I walked

them to school every morning, admiring Miguel and his watchful eye for trucks and cars along

the road, grabbing his three year old brother's reluctant hand every time one passed, Joel still

singing his song or telling his story about catching frogs or his dream last night. This is my third

space. Criteria and techniques for establishing trustworthiness are important in this type of

research and should be carefully considered in rigorous research that is subjective, socially

constructed, contextual, and involves multiple ways of knowing.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the ability to "demonstrate truth value, provide the basis for

applying it, and allow for external judgments to be made about the consistency of its procedures

and the neutrality of its findings or decisions" (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 29). Decrop (2004)

outlined techniques and criteria for establishing trustworthiness according to Lincoln and Guba's

(1985) typology for rigorous qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba's typology was developed

for this type of social research in attempt to rethink positivist researchers' criteria of validity,

reliability, generalizability, and objectivity. The idea was to transcend a quantitative/qualitative

debate, recognizing that quantitative research criteria do not directly apply to qualitative

research. They developed the criteria to lead qualitative researchers to more rigorous, credible,

and thorough interpretations. The typology describes credibility, transferability, dependability,

and confirmability.

Credibility refers to the truthfulness of the findings. Jobbins (2004) cited Bulmer (1993)

when discussing research in developing countries, "concerns about trust are connected more

often with suspicion about researchers as outsiders, and the potential political consequences of

giving information." Decrop (2004) suggested that prolonged interaction and engagement can

enhance credibility. In this study, I believe that my greatest limitation regarding trust with my

participants is that Los Rapaces deeply desires to continue projects and hosting students in

Achiote. Therefore, the responses I received in the interviews could have been more positively

framed than what they actually felt. However, as I spent more time with them and speaking with

them, a few discomforts and negative aspects emerged.

A few years ago, one of the projects for the students was to begin construction of a

restaurant in the neighboring town of Escobal. Several of the neighboring towns have seen the

success of the restaurant in Achiote and expressed desire for one for their own town. The

students worked to build the foundation and completed about half of the construction of the

restaurant. The man from Escobal who approached Los Rapaces about using the volunteers for

the construction never built anything after the students left. Right now, it is a half-built structure

taken over by lush vegetation. Los Rapaces is unhappy and disappointed, to say the least, with

the man from Escobal. This sentiment became more apparent as I spent time with Los Rapaces. They are extremely proud to host the student volunteers, and feel that if a project is not completed by the students, then they will finish it themselves. Co-operative, interactive relationships between researcher and participants enhance credibility (Decrop, 2004). Over the course of my time in Panama, I developed relationships and friendships with the people there. Decrop also suggests sharing transcripts or a summary of the analysis with informants. In this study, this took the form of presentations and discussions both in the community of Achiote and at CEASPA in Panama City and regular meetings with Los Rapaces.

The second criterion is transferability, which refers to the ability to apply research findings in another setting or group. Decrop suggests that theoretical sampling and thick descriptions enhance transferability. Theoretical sampling means that the researcher deliberately seeks and adds new cases to develop further insight for the study. When I began my research, interviewing Panamanian ecotourism professionals was not part of my plan. However, I learned that their perspective would enhance the broader contextual understanding of the situation and sought them out to deepen the study. Additionally, in my analysis I focus on the aspects of the data that are rich and descriptive of the situation and person saying it.

Dependability refers to the consistency of results and their ability to be reproduced (Decrop, 2004). This means the researcher should have a set research plan, but allow for flexibility. I specifically chose the sustainable livelihoods framework due to its ability to be modified and fit a myriad of contexts and situations. I also chose it because it directly applies to the goals and tenets of volunteer tourism. The last criterion in Lincoln and Guba's typology is confirmability, which refers to the neutrality of findings and use of sound analytical procedures.

Decrop suggests the researcher leave a clear audit trail and keep a reflexive journal throughout the research process.

Further, trustworthiness is dealt with perhaps most comprehensively by trianglulation. Triangulation is a technique that is used to help limit personal and methodological biases by gathering information from different angles or perspectives (Decrop, 2004). Decrop discussed Denzin's (1978) four types of triangulation, all in attempt to lend credibility to qualitative research by combining different theories, methodologies, methods, and data sources. The first is data triangulation in which the researcher uses a variety of data sources for interpretation and analysis. For example, field notes, interviews, participant observation, and various written material like websites, minutes of meetings, or newspaper articles can all be used to provide different points of view and insight. Method triangulation is similar in that the researcher uses multiple techniques to investigate a single problem. Investigator triangulation is important for the reduction of biases. If outside researchers look at the same data, they can help confirm or invalidate particular interpretations as well as help lessen subjectivity of the primary researcher's interpretations. Lastly, theoretical triangulation refers to using multiple theories or perspectives to analyze a particular problem. Theoretical triangulation is clearly present in this study by the merging of volunteer tourism theory and sustainable livelihoods theory in the sustainable livelihoods framework I modified for this study. My research assistant helped in the interpretation of the data aiding in investigator triangulation. Further, multiple methods and data sources were used in data collection and analysis for this study.

In addition, it is important to note that a historical consciousness arises through a changed memory over time, with "considerations of the difference between life as it had been lived, in all its uncertainty and unknowingness, and life as it appears now, through the eyes of the present"

(Freeman, 2007, p. 122). Another factor is that individuals may experience and therefore remember that experience in context of the individual's life and past experiences (Freeman, 2007). I was told that electricity was introduced to Achiote in five different years by five different people. The exact year that electricity was introduced is a concrete detail. The variation of responses I received about something that happened in a particular year highlights how a more abstract concept like bilateral benefits of volunteer projects in Achiote may elicit a wide range of responses. It did. The sentiments and details of the stories and experiences remembered change. Additionally, the language and words used to write stories limit accurate representation while simultaneously provoking emotion and reality within the reader (Ellis & Bochner, 1996). Ellis and Bochner (1996) discussed the crisis of representation in the context of truth, knowledge, and reality. They describe ethnographic work not so much as a representation but as communication. Rather than dwelling on the accuracy of survey data, I attempt to blur science and literature through deliberate, careful, and empirical writing (Ellis & Bochner, 1996).

Conclusion

In the following chapters, I attempt to both provide a voice for the participants as well as integrate myself as a researcher that is inextricably linked to the people and places that this research takes place using narrative techniques. For example, the story of a woman in Achiote named Florencia embodies the livelihood changes many have experienced in Achiote in the past decades. The beginning of her story starts Chapter IV and weaves throughout the rest of this narrative about livelihoods, in Florencia's story as a subsistence farmer, in tiny town in a tropical forest experiencing large-scale change and infrastructure development. I navigate local, national, and international contexts and issues through various voices and stories in the study. Through

presenting several specific people's situation and livelihood structures, I aim to expose the nuances of the greater situation.

For reference, Chapter IV presents the story through the first three layers of the sustainable livelihoods framework. In Chapter V, I discuss the story I tell in Chapter IV and how the story reflects the research questions for this study. I continue with the fourth and fifth layers of the framework, livelihood strategies and sustainable livelihood outcomes. I focus most closely on the livelihood strategies described by participants and develop a research plan for the future. Chapter V dissects the meaning of the story in Chapter IV through my voice as the researcher and returns to the research questions and sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter is the story of the research. I showcase the participants' experience through the lens of the sustainable livelihoods framework, using thick and rich description, firsthand experience, point of view, point of reference, and voice. Examination of volunteer tourism in a sustainable livelihoods context requires multiple levels of analysis, scale, perspectives, and critical thought. I weave in support or diversions of each concept from the data as well as the literature. I detail the most important characteristics that emerged from the interviews, focus group, meetings, presentations, and field notes. Every name in this story is a pseudonym to protect those involved.

Tracy (2010) suggested that high quality qualitative research should be distinguished by a worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence. "Worthy studies are interesting and point out surprises – issues that shake readers from their common-sense assumptions and practices" (Tracy, 2010, p. 841). Stories from each major stakeholder help develop a more holistic picture of the volunteer tourism process. Belsky (2004) criticized tourism researchers for a lack of research embedded in particular cultural and environmental settings. This lack is "particularly problematic given the increasing emphasis of politicians and development planners around the world on tourism as a means of economic development, and on development based on the problematic model of Western modernisation" (Belsky, 2004, p. 275). I cannot attempt this description as an Achiote resident, as I did not stay there long enough to call this study an ethnography and I will never be an Achiote resident myself, as much as I would like to tell myself that someday I might be. Therefore, the most honest account I can provide, and perhaps most appropriate in a discussion

of tourism, is a lens to Achiote through the voices of the people in this study with the insertion of my earnest interpretation of how the voices fit together to create a much larger story.

The translations of each quote used in this study from the interviews in Spanish are outlined in Appendix II (Ap. II). A full description of the stakeholders involved in the partnership and people interviewed for this study is provided in Chapter I. In this chapter, I present the results assuming the reader has prior knowledge of the study. Similarly, a theoretical description of volunteer tourism in a sustainable livelihoods context is provided in Chapter II.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an in depth look at the intricate dynamics of volunteer tourism using sustainable livelihoods as the lens. I provide examples and thoughts from the research findings to begin to address the research questions of this study. First, the perspectives and visions of the collaborative partnership, and second regarding how a sustainable livelihoods framework can be used to understand and explain volunteer tourism. In order to present a cohesive story, I do not strictly adhere to a consecutive explanation of each theme presented in the framework as many themes are interconnected and build on one another. I discuss how the story relates to the framework more explicitly in Chapter V.

First, to address the first research question in this chapter, I set the scene of the village of Achiote in general in order to situate the lives and livelihoods of the people living there and the livelihood changes they have experienced over the previous decades. After this contextual overview of Achiote, I detail the background of the collaborative partnership for this study, which simultaneously addresses the central feature of the sustainable livelihoods framework (RQ2) and the visions and perspectives of the collaborative partnership (RQ1) . The preliminary

establishment of institutional processes and organizational structures is consistent with the sustainable livelihoods framework.

This chapter addresses the perspectives and thoughts of the community residents, Los Rapaces, CEASPA, and university faculty and student leaders of volunteer tourism projects. In doing so, I address the second research question of this study. The first research question of this study seeks to understand the visions and perspectives of volunteer tourism stakeholders involved in a long term collaborative relationship. The cross-cultural collaborative relationship in volunteer tourism is perhaps the most important aspect of successful volunteer tourism projects (Lamoureux, 2009). Gaining host communities', host organizations', volunteer tourism organizations', and volunteer tourism leaders' perspectives allows each to collaborate and understand each other at a greater capacity. Better understanding collaborative processes informs the entire functionality of the sustainable livelihoods approach, and is an important component to operationalizing successful projects which enhance sustainable livelihood outcomes.

I then take a wide-angle lens and contextualize development, government policy, and tourism development in Panama. This foundational information is necessary to situate this study at the local, national, and international levels. In doing so, I expand the analysis from the first research question to the second research question by addressing issues in the sustainable livelihoods framework. After analysis of broader context and trends, I return to Achiote and the livelihood resources and capacities for ecotourism and volunteer tourism. Ecotourism is currently in the very early stages of development in Achiote and in their surrounding region. Because the projects conducted by the university student volunteers have contributed primarily to ecotourism infrastructure development, I next turn to the role of the volunteer tourists and the projects they perform in Achiote. I highlight the stories of three volunteer projects that occurred in Achiote in

2010, 2011, and 2012. These three projects insight key issues in volunteer tourism in rural communities. The first is regarding insufficient and incomplete project work when Los Rapaces partnered with a newly formed ecotourism group in the neighboring town of Escobal. In the second, I talk about how the community was worried about the student volunteers' perceptions of them and their capabilities when the project was not to build something new, but repair previous projects. This brings me to the third story, of a reported successful project by the introduction of an income-generating ecotourism cabin as well as a renewed sense of value of the project from the community and student volunteers, but with the caveat of an example of the capacity of Los Rapaces and Achiote to host volunteers.

Change and infrastructure development is on the horizon for Achiote and their surrounding region. Understanding their assets and resources, as well as their challenges, is important to develop strategies for sustainable livelihoods of the people in Achiote. The worth and value of the volunteer projects concludes the chapter because this became a point of dissent among the stakeholders interviewed for this study. It also leads back to the intersection between sustainable livelihoods and volunteer tourism and the importance of understanding within collaborative partnerships, which is discussed in-depth in Chapter V.

Achiote, Panama: Change in the Past, Present, and Future

The story told by a woman named Florencia embodies life and livelihood change in Achiote. Florencia is a subsistence farmer and raised eleven children in Achiote. She stands a few inches shy of five feet and her smile exhibits the lack of front teeth. She deeply cares about Achiote, its people, its future, and in particular the future of her farm and land. She even has her own unique strand of coffee bean that she developed to best suit the soil on her land. Her story highlights the changes in livelihood structure in Achiote over the past few decades, particularly

regarding economic status and opportunities. She remembers when she used lamps and candles for light and when the road was gravel and constantly wet and sliding. She said:

> And now here we have light, we have roads, and it's growing a lot. And with the school, we have telebasica [a television education program for the high school students] that we didn't have, and all the children finish at least sixth grade here and the things they have are growing…This is my wish, to better the community (Florencia, Ap. II, no. 3).

Because Achiote is a small rural village that had limited access to transportation and communication until recently, there is a strong sense of community as they have had to rely on each other for survival. The paved road was built in the mid-1990s connecting the region to Colon and the rest of Panama. With the introduction of the paved road, Achiote residents and people in neighboring communities were afforded easier access to Colon and subsequently the rest of the country without being hindered by mudslides and other effects of the rainy season and an unreliable road. People could work in Colon and commute. They could have access to resources and opportunities outside of their village. Some have benefitted from these opportunities greatly and have changed their economic status to wage earning livelihoods. Some have not.

Change is salient to Achiote residents, and not only socially and economically, but environmentally as well. However, many people in the village, particularly those that are primarily dependent on agriculture to sustain their livelihoods, know that their environmental resources serve them more than some of the nearby coastal communities who traditionally depend on coconuts and fishing for their livelihoods.

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Florencia detailed how the vegetation and soil in Achiote is higher quality than the surrounding communities. She reiterated this in the focus group, and it was clearly a point of pride for her to live in Achiote and be able to benefit from the ecological resources it offers.

> In other communities the land doesn't serve them, and in other countries they
> have very little vegetation…We are special to have this vegetation (Florencia, Ap.
> II, no. 4).

She explained how when the Canal was constructed, much of the vegetation and the natural processes were disrupted, leaving the community with little rain and higher temperatures. However, there was an effort to reforest with the installment of the projects associated with San Lorenzo. The temperature for crops has normalized and the plants grew back. Now she is able to grow enough vegetables and coffee to feed her family and to sell. Everyone that I interviewed that lives in Achiote mentioned the abundance of vegetation, birds, and wildlife where they live. As mentioned in the introduction, the nearby San Lorenzo National Park is home to 81 species of mammals and 430 species of birds. While the drawbridge limits transportation and communication, their geographic location has safeguarded their area from the deforestation and infrastructure development witnessed in many other parts of Panama.

As shown in Figure 4.1, Colon Province, Panama is divided into two regions by the Panama Canal. The area west of the Canal is locally referred to as Costa Abajo and is where Achiote is located. The area east of the Canal is known as Costa Arriba. Historically, Costa Abajo suffers limited access to the resources and ports of the city of Colon on the opposite side of the Canal due to the drawbridge that does not provide consistent and easy travel across the Canal. Travelers and locals alike wait for the barges to cross the Canal for upwards of an hour at

times to cross. This barrier has caused the region west of the Canal to lack a consistent

development, policy, planning, and attention from the national government.

Figure 4.1. Map of Colon Province, Panama (Embassy World, 1998).

Costa Arriba is much more developed for tourism and transportation than Costa Abajo,

largely because of the wait for the drawbridge to access Costa Abajo. In one of the interviews,

Achiote was described as,

the land that time forgot (Henry),

because it has been so disconnected and cut off because of the drawbridge and the inability to

easily adhere to set schedules and plans.

You don't know when you're going to arrive, and you don't know when you're

going to get back (Lucas, Ap. II, no. 5).

In contrast to the multibillion dollar infrastructure development projects and skyscrapers in Panama City, in Achiote there is no internet, sporadic cellular service, and many traditionally use horses for transportation. The following passages are indicative of how many describe life in Achiote. A blend of relationships with people and the land emanate from many descriptions of the village life in Achiote. The first passage is from a 28 year old who milks cows every morning on his sister's farm. His family owns the small business that makes cheese in Achiote. He hopes to someday start a tourism operation to take people in boats to a waterfall on his land, which he describes as paradise.

> It's calm and peaceful, and here I have everything, my farm, my work. And outside my work, I have my relationships, my friends. It's important to me to have my relationships and friendships. On the farm we have everything. We have pigs, hens, coffee, plantains, cattle on the farm. I work with my sister to milk the cows. We don't use injections or hormones (Carlos, Ap. II, no. 1).

This statement is descriptive of life in Achiote because he mentions that life in Achiote is calm and peaceful, relationships are important, an agricultural livelihood, and notes his natural cattle farming practices. The next statement is from a woman who did not grow up in Achiote. She moved there when she married her husband. She talked about how she values living in a place with an abundance of vegetation and bird life. Where she grew up, people cut down many of the trees in favor of making space for cattle grazing. She remembers that after this happened, there was much less rain and much more sunshine, therefore inhibiting normal farming practices in the area. However, in Achiote:

Everything, the natural environment, it's very calm and peaceful…There are

many caring people, good people, and you can just chat with them, and it makes

me happy (Maria, Ap. II, no. 2).

A stark contrast exists between those that have benefitted from development and those

who still maintain traditional livelihoods based on subsistence farming and a diverse portfolio of

activities to attain their livelihoods. The economic and social contrast extends to the regional

scale of Costa Abajo. The contrast is even apparent among neighboring communities in Costa

Abajo. Achiote is wealthier than the surrounding communities. They have the most well-kept

school in the area. All the regional government offices are located in Achiote, and all the recent

local government representatives are from Achiote.

From a few brief tours to neighboring towns, the housing in Achiote is much newer,

taken care of, and many of the houses on the main street even have landscaping. Of course, there

are many wooden shacks with tin roofs, but not nearly as much overt poverty as I originally

expected. Now what happens behind those doors, I don't fully know, and much of which I will

never know. Many people live in each house. When I went to a friend's house and met his

family, I discovered that my new friend, his mother, father, three sisters, his sister's four month

old baby lived together in two small bedrooms and a small kitchen. They live in a wooden home

prone to rot and decay as a result of living in a tropical humid forest.

The change Achiote has experienced over the years pervades the lives and livelihoods of

the people that live there. A CEASPA representative reflected on when they first began work in

Achiote.

So many things have changed. There's a lot more money in the community. The

houses have changed. There's a lot more concrete houses than there were. You'll

see when you go. You don't have anything with which to compare, but you'll see.

When we arrived there, the road, the old weathered road, had only been in there

for about four years, so people would remember well that when it rained, they

could not get out of the community, it was so muddy. Ok? So an asphalt

road…You know when we arrived, they were only just beginning to get

connected, now there are cars zooming up and down all the time and buses

zooming up and down all the time (Amelia).

Florencia's children have all left Achiote to study or work, and she is left to tend to the

farm by herself. She is by herself on the mountain. Her children do not wish to continue work on

the farm in Achiote. She says that they see her work and work and work and receive nothing;

they see that she only works to feed the household. There isn't any entry to another life. No extra

spending money, no upward mobility, no other opportunities other than feeding the family. Her

children want spending money, upward mobility, and other opportunities. They looked for

something better and so they left. She talks about how she doesn't have money; she has her farm.

Her husband can no longer work due to an accident. He didn't attend school because he worked

on the farm his entire life, and cannot find new work because he lacks education and skills. She

only completed first grade herself. A CEASPA employee noted that there is a very strong

contrast in the community between people with money and those who do not.

CEASPA's interest in Achiote changed livelihood and community structure even further.

Since the mid-1990s, their involvement has included community development trainings for the

formulation of community groups and education. The insertion of CEASPA and the community

development projects initiated in the area continues this story of livelihoods, change, and development to understand the institutional and organizational context, the opportunities and challenges presented in Achiote and Costa Abajo, and the history of development in the area

A History of an NGO in a Tiny Village

The partnership between the university, CEASPA, Los Rapaces, and Achiote was formed as a result of several global and local events that occurred in the history and lives of the people involved in the partnership today. The first and perhaps most important event was the transfer of the Panama Canal from the United States to Panamanian control. The second was the enactment of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor. This made it easier to gain funding for the projects. The third was a training course offered by the university for protected area managers around Latin America and other Spanish speaking countries. Several CEASPA employees attended this course and began initial connections and ideas for the volunteer groups and trips.

Since their beginning in 1977, CEASPA worked on issues with the Canal because one of their founders was an advisor on the Canal Treaties. When the Canal was changing control from the United States to the Panamanians, CEASPA worked with the Panamanian inter-institutional committee on what to do with the remaining US military lands. Many US military lands around the Canal were converted to parks and protected areas to help protect the Canal watershed. In the 1990s, CEASPA was working on a citizen's education campaign for citizen's participation in the decisions of how the Canal area should be used when it changed to Panamanian control. Until this time, most of CEASPA's projects focused predominantly on political, social, and economic issues. Because of their involvement in the instatement of national parks associated with the Canal, CEASPA introduced an environmental analysis aspect to their repertoire. They focused

on environmental cleanup of many of the areas and converting them into national parks. Without a properly protected watershed, the Canal would not function and ships could not pass through.

During this process, the local government representative of the area where Achiote is located expressed a desire to protect the area of San Lorenzo, which was then a US military training base. CEASPA submitted a proposal with Fundación Natura, a Panamanian funding agency, to work with local people in a project that would provide income earning opportunities and protect the forest in San Lorenzo. The community-based portion of the project focused on training local people in sustainable coffee production because traditional coffee is grown under tree canopy, therefore simultaneously providing economic opportunities and protecting ecological processes and biodiversity.

At the same time, the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor was being developed in an ambitious international effort for conservation and development throughout Central America. The Global Environmental Facility (GEF) of the World Bank was putting a lot of money into the project. Within a decade of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor's inception in 1997, more than US$500 million was invested for the project with particular focus on cooperation and integration (Holland, 2012). This funding included a large project to work with the Panamanian National Environmental Authority (ANAM). The GEF included an invitation for CEASPA's involvement due to their history in working in community participation in Panama. CEASPA then came up with a proposal for the World Bank for the San Lorenzo Effective Protection with Community Participation project, which received almost $1 million.

San Lorenzo National Park was established as a national park and UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999, and formerly was used as a U.S. military training base for jungle-type warfare. The Nature Conservancy, four branches of Panamanian federal government, CEASPA,

and several others developed a plan for the fortification of San Lorenzo as a national park protected area. The reason the park also includes a World Heritage Site is because enclosed in the park boundaries is Fort San Lorenzo, a Spanish colonial lookout fort that was highly utilized for transport of goods from the Americas to Spain in the 16th and 17th centuries. The fort overlooks the delta of the Chagres River to the Caribbean Sea as shown in Figure 4.2. The Chagres River is said to be the richest river in the world because it has seen more gold pass through its waters than any other. Fort San Lorenzo was an important shipping point for the Spanish during that time as the outlet from the Camino de las Cruzes and later the railroad across Panama. The Spanish fleet shipped much of the gold, people, and other goods back to Spain from the fort. When the French attempted but failed at a Panama Canal, they began construction through the Chagres River. Captain Morgan, Balboa, and others have been said to have attacked Fort San Lorenzo.

Figure 4.2. Photograph of UNESCO World Heritage Site, Fort San Lorenzo, Colon Province, Panama (Eddins, 2011).

These events served as the foundation for a community development plan for the region locally referred to as Costa Abajo, the area west of the Canal in Colon Province, Panama, including the community of Achiote. The region east of the Canal is known as Costa Arriba,

which holds San Lorenzo's sister national park that was formulated in the same management plan, Portobelo National Park. CEASPA was appointed to develop and initiate the involvement of the communities adjacent to San Lorenzo National Park. This was when CEASPA formed the coffee cooperative in the area. The coffee cooperative is still functioning today.

The second project CEASPA initiated in Achiote was to form a community ecotourism group with funds from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the US Fish and Wildlife Fund. The project dovetailed on the idea of San Lorenzo. They called the project 'Making Achiote a Bird and Birder-Friendly Community.' As part of this project, CEASPA trained people in monitoring migratory raptors in the area. In Spanish, the word for raptors is *los rapaces*. Hence Los Rapaces was formed in 2004. The idea was to involve the community of Achiote so they could provide local guides, facilities, and places to go for tourists with a focus on their natural resources and abundance of bird species. They wanted to help Achiote create an ecotourism destination in partnership with the resources available to them, specifically a world-renowned area for birders, a national park, World Heritage Site, and involvement of their local culture and customs. A member of CEASPA reflected on the process of forming the group:

> And we thought, oh yeah, we've got this crazy project with [US]AID. We had to
> spend so much money in 11 months. We were all absolutely exhausted by the end
> of it. It was really intense. I mean, it was wonderful. They needed success…so
> they asked CEASPA, they said, "Would you please, could you do a community
> tourism project for us? But the conditions are you have to spend this much money
> in this much time." Ok? Well, we were all on the floor at the end of it, right? It
> was fantastic, but, you know? I think it would be interesting to ask about that

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actually, because the amount of training! Those poor people and the people in Los

Rapaces. I mean they were in training every week and they didn't have time to

breathe, so we thought it was amazing (Amelia).

The effects of the initial training have been long lasting. Los Rapaces has endured as a

community-based ecotourism group for eight years now. In addition, Ricardo was invited to

participate in a training course for ecotourism planning in Costa Rica the year Los Rapaces was

initiated. A man who was present at the training remembers Ricardo as

a really good bird guide. He really knew his stuff (Henry).

The training was focused on how to build, design, maintain and interpret trails. Ricardo was

exposed to the guides in Monteverde, which this man says has some of the best guides in the

world.

So he got to see how a world class protected area runs with its trails, its

guides…and then the whole relationship to all the hotels and restaurants and the

gift shops and all in the buffer zone. So he just saw one of the best examples in

Latin America of an ecotourism destination that has not become a mass tourism

destination, because a lot of the stuff is really good, all the guides and stuff are all

locals (Henry).

He noted the perseverance of Los Rapaces. He said that they started working in the area

in 1995, and 17 years later they're still a functioning group. A woman in Los Rapaces

remembers when CEASPA first came to her community to form the ecotourism group.

I discovered that it is good to conserve the birds, we had to form an ecotourism

group and the opportunity to aid tourists. The idea for the restaurant was born, to

build the trails, bird watching platforms, all of it. The tourists come but they

would only stay somewhere else, they didn't come here. They didn't come

because there were only very small shops, there wasn't a restaurant, there weren't

attractions, there weren't services (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 6).

She talks about how now many people come to Achiote because of CEASPA's initial

involvement. However, not everyone that was involved in the initial trainings in the formulation

of Los Rapaces has remained a part of the group. An understanding of the processes of local

participation in these community development projects helps better understand the role of Los

Rapaces as a community group in the greater context and everyday lives of people in Achiote.

Local Participation and Community Development

Before I arrived in Achiote, I heard a few stories about the way Los Rapaces was formed

and the way they stand today. I thought that they were a group of people who were brought

together to form an ecotourism group by CEASPA, which is true, but I heard that they separated

into two different groups through ideological differences. This part is only partly true. Los

Rapaces started with 18 or 19 people. I received differing responses on the exact number. Now

there are only five. Several people who were involved with the group in the beginning but ended

up leaving the group continue to help and support when the student volunteers come, but many

left the group. I talked with several of them that left. Most of them said that they had to take care

of their own families and work to make money. Florencia is one of those that left the group. She

said,

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Now my experience is like a partner to continue and struggle for the community. I

am always here, and for whatever they need, they call me. I can always help and

support (Florencia, Ap. II, no. 7).

Although a clear sense of community cohesion exists in Achiote, not everyone that left the group

continues to support it.

A similar sentiment exists in the coffee cooperative. When it was formed, there were 50

coffee farms linking people from five surrounding communities involved in the beginning. Now

there are 13. I interviewed the leader of the coffee cooperative. He and Ricardo hold similar

sentiments about the people that left their groups, the coffee cooperative and Los Rapaces

respectively. They both noted that people just wanted to make money and did not see the long

term benefits associated. Manuel said about the people that left,

Many people believed that the cooperative is without work, only money, money,

money. Uh, no, you have to work. They thought that it was Christmas. This is

something that displeases me (Mateo, Ap. II, no. 8).

Ricardo, the president of Los Rapaces, held a more understanding point of view about

people leaving the ecotourism group:

We have passed difficult times, difficulties when we were being formed [as Los

Rapaces]. When they have to eat and work and sacrifice for it. And because of

this many people left because they weren't in agreement, to work and to work,

and nothing coming to them. But the vision is participation to work for the future,

but the future is longer than four years. I couldn't admonish them for it. I don't

blame the people that were in the group…because sometimes they don't have the

resources to work together, with the group (Ricardo, Ap. II, no. 9).

There are two primary issues regarding local participation in Achiote and the surrounding

communities. First, is it still considered local participation if only a few people in the community

are involved? This leads to the second issue of who benefits and who doesn't. A CEASPA

representative had this to say about local participation and community development in Achiote:

> You're going to find this community participation thing in Achiote. You go over
>
> there and they would say, "CEASPA? Oh, I don't know what they do. El Centro
>
> el Tucán? Oh, I don't know what they do. Tourism in Achiote? Well, I don't
>
> benefit from it." It's the same [group of people]. It's four people, five people.
>
> Okay, there are 19 who started. They didn't want to do the leg work, so it ends up
>
> with four or five that do. And it's still called community participation, you know?
>
> So you know, we shouldn't fool ourselves about what we've done (Amelia).

The willingness and capability of people to participate is a barrier for greater community

involvement in Achiote. Local participation in Achiote is characteristic of many other

communities. Not everyone wants to participate. Not everyone has time to participate. Similar

issues arise with local participation in communities in the United States and all over the world. If

people are not motivated or interested or have a stake in what's going on, they most likely will

not get involved. In a discussion of community participation in ecotourism development

initiatives, a man that was involved in the initial instatement of San Lorenzo and the trainings for

Los Rapaces also made the distinction between individuals and the community in involvement:

I'd say like community participation is very tentative and people didn't have a clue. There wasn't any tourism. There wasn't any tradition of it, and most efforts to involve the community in ecotourism fail because we expect too much of the communities too quickly. In other words, you take a community that's been farmers and ranchers, and you try to tell them, or even if there's already tourists showing up in buses, and say hey! We're going to turn you into successful tourism entrepreneurs! (Henry).

He noted several factors that limit the ability for community ecotourism initiatives to succeed, particularly when the idea for tourism was not the community's idea. First, some people have more natural business acumen than others. He notes that you can train people in mental math and tidy bookkeeping and basic accounting, but some people have more natural skills than others. Second, many small remote communities do not fully understand the expectations of tourists. He specifically referred to cleanliness and timeliness.

They're kind of foreign concepts to these folks (Henry).

This dilemma can be furthered by the immediate access tourists have to websites that rate destinations.

The process of incorporating community development and participation into the plan was a challenge for CEASPA, not because of the World Bank but because of the Panamanian government's hesitations to include it. In fact, the World Bank strongly supported a community participation portion of the plan for San Lorenzo. The four Panamanian government agencies involved in the project, however, had other plans. I cannot speak for them as I do not have information directly from their sources. However, I do know that it was a point of contention to

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include community participation between the government agencies and CEASPA. CEASPA played the part of mediator between the Panamanian government agencies and the World Bank. The Panamanian government's unwillingness to provide support for local people is a theme woven throughout many of the interview responses for this study. This was, of course, until they discovered that incorporating community participation was an attractive concept to external funding sources.

One person from CEASPA remembers how the concept of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor had turned into the Plan Puebla Panama, a national plan for community development and participation in areas surrounding the newly instated parks and protected areas. She recalls how the element of conservation was weakened and in many ways and a lot of the money was just spent. She called it an excess of participation:

> They said, "Oh! We have to have participation. Ok, right. This community, $40,000 there. Alright, this community? Ok, $20,000 there. Oh, look! The communities are managing the project!" But if there's no concept uniting them, there's no follow up, there's no support, then you're just spending your money, right? And that's what happened (Amelia).

Fortunately for Costa Abajo and the community of Achiote, CEASPA was involved in their training, management, follow up, and support of the installment of community participation. At that point, CEASPA had over 20 years of experience in this concept and were well versed in the nuances involved in attempting such a venture. CEASPA still has a bioliteracy program running in the schools focused on teaching elementary school students about environmental issues, natural sciences, and conservation. This type of curriculum would not be offered otherwise.

CEASPA characterizes itself as working throughout the whole community, but they recognize that there have been changes, that people have left. They say that the community can see what they have done and they can see the changes. In their projects in Achiote – the coffee cooperative, Los Rapaces, and the bioliteracy program in the schools – CEASPA holds discussions with the community so they can have the support that they want on their terms. The CEASPA representative in Achiote says that he participates, he learns what they want and he does it. He says of CEASPA's involvement,

> It is the form that the people can have support in the form that they want. They
> don't bring me if they don't want to, and I will not do it. CEASPA works toward
> the people learning and if they have interest in the things we can do, we can help
> and support and do them. If they don't want to know how to do it, we don't
> involve ourselves (Juan, Ap. II, no. 10).

CEASPA has been working with Los Rapaces over the years so they can eventually be an autonomous group. Before a more in-depth discussion of ecotourism and volunteer tourism in Achiote and the capacity of Los Rapaces as an autonomous ecotourism group, it is important to better understand the macro-economic context of economic development and geopolitical situation of Panama. Although Achiote is currently cut off from much of the rest of the world, change is coming.

The Amplification of the Panama Canal

In a discussion of volunteer tourism, ecotourism, development, and the sustainable livelihoods of people in Achiote, and in Panama more broadly, it is impossible to omit the political influences and dynamics of their situation. When Theodore Roosevelt rose to the presidency of the US, he spoke of the Panama Canal, "No single great material work which

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remains to be undertaken on this continent is as of such great consequence to the American people" (PBS, 2010). Panama has long endured the social and environmental effects of their geopolitical location. For centuries the isthmus has been impacted by global political and economic interests. I was in Achiote for the US's Independence Day. When I asked them when their Independence Day is, they asked me which one, from Colombia or from the US? Global geopolitical influence remains a constant in Panama, particularly with the decision to construct an additional channel to the Canal with enlarged locks to allow bigger cargo ships to pass through. The larger locks will allow easier access from China and other parts of Asia to the US's East Coast and other parts of the world.

The amplification of the Panama Canal is one of the largest infrastructure development projects in the world right now. An estimated 50% more ships will be able to pass through the Canal each day (Beaubein, 2012). This is the primary incentive for the construction, as the Panamanian government is paid on a sliding scale by the number of ships that cross the Canal and the economic value of the cargo aboard the ships. The more ships cross, the more money for the government.

The Panamanian government has controlled the Canal fully since 1999, only 13 years. The Canal carries with it international finance and business interests and influence from every major global power. Progress and development is the priority in Panama right now. I was told many times in Panama that the Panamanian government likes to call themselves a First World country. The tiny country has the highest economic growth rate in the Western hemisphere (Beaubien, 2012), including multibillion dollar infrastructure development projects like the expansion of the Canal and the construction of a subway system in Panama City. "Panama is an increasingly important destination for the flows of people, money, and ideas that circulate

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throughout the Americas, often with uneven results" (Jackiewicz & Craine, 2010, p. 5). The major infrastructure development for the Canal and in Panama City is juxtaposed to extreme poverty in rural areas in Panama. The economic reality in Panama is huge disparity in livelihood and economic opportunities between those that benefit from the global business transactions in Panama City, and people like residents of Achiote who are largely neglected in this process. The founder of the Panamanian daily newspaper, *La Prensa*, feels that Panama's major challenge is economic and social polarization (Beaubien, 2012). Achiote falls into the roughly one-third of the population that live in poverty.

In fact, although Panama's booming industrial development in transportation and logistics services has resulted in strong economic growth, the country has the second worst income distribution in Latin America (CIA, 2012). However, the unemployment rate decreased from 12% in 2006 to less than 3% in 2011 largely due to the employment opportunities associated with the construction. I found this particularly apparent in Achiote, where it seemed nearly every young person worked for the construction of the Canal in Colon or with the construction of the road connecting Costa Abajo along the Caribbean coast toward Bocas del Toro, the province that borders Costa Rica.

The ecotourism professional described the government and their choices and actions like a teenager searching for identity:

And that's where people fail to realize what the value is of Panama's nature. You know, but Panama's been competing. The same thing I tell everybody I meet, my thing with Panama competing. It's like that 14 year old that grows up one day and it's got hair in all sorts of new places than he had before, you know, his legs are

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growing faster than his muscles. He's very quirky, he can't control his body, he's

knocking stuff over, you know, and all of a sudden his brain's just telling him, oh

my god, you know, like the thoughts and he's reading. And he's this extremely

intellectual kid, and you're like, oh my god, you know, like how do you know

that? And then you turn around and then he does something completely stupid and

sophomoric. Okay? That's Panama. It's like it's trying to define itself as an

individual, as an adult, like who am I? Who am I as a person? And in the

meantime, I'm gonna make a lot of mistakes. And that's where we are (David).

Politics and Policy

The level of involvement and agenda of government agencies in community development

and planning in rural communities differed in each response I received. In my first week in

Achiote, I was invited to participate in a conversation with the Panamanian Tourism Authority

(ATP) and Los Rapaces about their status as a legally recognized ecotourism organization. Since

their inception, they have remained an informal community group. Approximately ten

representatives from the ATP came to Achiote to meet in the restaurant to discuss Los Rapaces'

role in ecotourism and community tourism. They discussed establishing a greater system of

tourism, but while upholding respect to the community livelihoods. They also discussed the

creation of interpretive materials such as maps, diagrams, internet links, and interpretive signs

for the trails. Legal recognition for Los Rapaces is an important step to them in having a voice

for tourism and empowerment, in addition to the opportunity to form more relationships and

partnerships, and possibly receive sponsorship and funding for growth and building capacity.

The president of Los Rapaces already talks about the partnerships they value with San Lorenzo

National Park and ANAM and also with the ATP.

Although the legal status of Los Rapaces would provide them with greater capability and access to resources, as an attendant of the meeting I was discouraged with the actions by the ATP and the way they spoke to and treated Los Rapaces. In my field notes, I wrote,

more people than actually needed at this point [came to the meeting] in my opinion, as only one of the women did most of the talking and it appeared, at some points, as if they were ganging up on Ricardo [the president of Los Rapaces] (Field Note, June 10, 2012).

The woman asked him to write a proposal about how Los Rapaces contributes to the ecotourism activities in Achiote, the surrounding towns, and near San Lorenzo. The way in which the woman from the ATP discussed it, however, clearly made him feel uncomfortable. His meek mannerisms did not reflect the outgoing, cheerful community group leader I was accustomed to seeing. Before I attended this meeting, I learned this perception of Los Rapaces was held by a CEASPA representative:

They don't even have a legal status of the group. Ask about that, it's called *personaria juridica*. A juridical person, you know, a sort of legal group association. And they tried with the Panamanian Tourism Institute, because all the language is, "Oh, we support community tourism. Oh, we support community groups." It's a load of [pause] bullshit. It's just not true. The truth is they are not interested in it (Amelia).

The same CEASPA representative was involved in the instatement of San Lorenzo and the development of the community groups. When the San Lorenzo project was taking place, representatives from the World Bank came from Washington, D.C. to Panama to listen to

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CEASPA. CEASPA valued this effort and regard it highly still. Her view of the way the Panamanian government responded to the efforts is different.

> The guys in Panama City, we have written them letters. They never come. They are not interested in our problems. They [the people in Achiote] are not treated with dignity and respect. The guy from the Ministry of Health goes around and tells them off because they are dirty. So people aren't used to being treated as people. That is one of the things I like about CEASPA and the kids from [the university]. It's this, you know, you're talking to a person (Amelia).

As I understand it, Los Rapaces has a close connection with the local representatives and local employees of the ATP and ANAM. This CEASPA representative is referring to officials who hold higher positions, particularly in Panama City. The woman that did most of the talking in the meeting with the ATP and Los Rapaces was from the ATP in Panama City. The rest of the attendees that came to Achiote for the meeting came from Colon.

A different CEASPA representative named Juan, the one that works most closely with the projects in Achiote, discussed the way CEASPA has subsided their role over the years to allow Los Rapaces to become an autonomous group. Juan said that by the end of the fifth year of CEASPA's slowly decreasing level of involvement, guidance, and support, CEASPA no longer had a role in Los Rapaces. They were only partnered with ANAM. He said it was very important that Los Rapaces maintain their relationships with the ATP and with ANAM for direct coordination with their offices. The role and agenda of the government in policy and regulation in Achiote remains unclear to me. Unfortunately I was unable to interview anyone from the ATP or ANAM in political positions other than the local government representative for this study.

What I do know is that little is being done in terms of sustainable development and ecotourism planning and policy, but much is being done in terms of infrastructure development.

The Bridge: Unimpeded Vehicular Access

Not every village, town, community, or city must become a tourism destination. However, change is coming. Not small change like choosing to plant bananas in the field instead of coffee. Big, potentially disastrous, shake-the-system kind of change is coming to Costa Abajo. A traffic bridge is set to be completed over the Canal in 2014 as part of the multi-billion dollar infrastructure development of the Canal, replacing the drawbridge and eliminating the time spent waiting for the ships to cross. To highlight the type of change that has occurred in Achiote, CEASPA employee describes Achiote and the surrounding areas this way:

> So you go out there, there's no electricity, there's no roads. Overall if you look at
> the year 2000 Census, the average education level is four and a half years of
> school. Yes, that's all, that's it. People don't even have radios, no TV. The
> housing, I mean, where you'll be, you're going to see people on the main road,
> right? That's very different. You get off the main road, I mean, relatively
> speaking it's really, really bad. The whole of the Canal, west of the Canal in
> Colon Province, it had 20,000 people population in the year 2000. I think it had
> one university graduate lived on that west bank. No banks, no restaurants, no
> hotels. Okay? So you can imagine how things are going to change when this
> bridge is constructed (Amelia).

Yet another CEASPA representative described the impending change coming to Achiote:

When there's unimpeded vehicular access this place is going to change like this [snaps fingers]. Scary, scary, scary. It's going to be such a huge difference. People have no idea of the changes that are going to come with that bridge. Everybody wants the bridge (Fernando).

The last sentence is not entirely true. Yes, there is an overwhelming sentiment in favor of the bridge. Why wouldn't they want the bridge? Many people rise very early in the morning to work in Colon. When the bridge is constructed, they could enjoy more time to sleep or spend time with their family when they get home at night. For those that do not work in Colon, many have to take off entire days of work to travel there to run errands. They could go to the grocery store and be back within a few hours. Without waiting for the ships to cross the Canal, Colon is less than a half hour drive away.

Colon is the closest city to Achiote and is notorious as the most dangerous city in Panama. Colon is wrought with drug-related violence, gangs, and crime as the major northern port for ships heading east through the Canal. Panama is the first stop north for drug traffickers from Colombia and other South American countries involved in drug trafficking. The CIA (2012) identifies the Colon Free Zone, an area in Colon that does not tax goods shipped through the Canal, as a primary center for money-laundering narcotics revenue. The people that live in Costa Abajo and Achiote are currently safeguarded from the violence and crime so close to them geographically, but still so far away socially. The draw bridge and the wait to get to Colon is the safeguard. When the bridge opens for unrestricted vehicular access from Colon, Achiote can get to Colon much easier for travel and resources, but Colon can also get to Achiote much easier with drugs and crime.

Colon was a constant fear for me. At the hostels in Panama City, I routinely heard stories of travelers robbed at gun point by teenagers and constant warning from hostel staff not to bother going there. I had to. It was the only route to get to Panama City. I was intensely grateful to meet my friend and local cab driver, Alejandro, so I could avoid the transition from the crowded converted US school bus, now Panamanian public transportation, in the terminal to or from the express bus to Panama City. Tourists are warned not to go to Colon unless at least accompanied by a Panamanian. However, tourists must pass through Colon to get to Achiote. There is no doubt this has deterred many tourists from visiting San Lorenzo, Achiote Road, and Achiote.

The effects of drug trafficking and alcoholism is readily apparent in the Caribbean coastal town of Piña located only twenty minutes from Achiote in Costa Abajo. Drug runners drop packages into the ocean at particular places and the tides wash them onto shore. Residents of the coastal towns pick them up and continue their distribution from there, whether in the area or on their way elsewhere. Piña is noticeably different than Achiote. There are many more bottles littered around. The houses are dilapidated and run down. There are more people sleeping on the street on a given Tuesday afternoon. One morning while having breakfast at the restaurant in Achiote, the restaurant was buzzing about a drug-related murder in Piña. The women immediately focused their conversation on their own youth and how grateful they are to live in a town that is *tranquilo* like Achiote. I was not scared to stay alone in the Centro Tucán in Achiote, but I would have been scared to stay in Piña.

Achiote is small, so small that if anything bad happened, if anyone wronged or slighted me or anyone else, everyone in town would know almost immediately. When I hired Alejandro to drive me to Colon because I did not want to change buses by myself, he had absolutely no conception of why I should be scared. Most of the men didn't. The women, on the other hand,

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constantly asked if I was scared to be staying alone in the comparatively huge community center on the hill. Several men told me that the women would be scared of spiders and bugs. The women proceeded with horror stories of drunkards trying to break into their homes in the middle of the night. Achiote is not without its problems and issues. Alcohol abuse is readily witnessed at any time on any day of the week. At the end of my nine weeks there, I knew which houses to avoid and who was involved in drug trafficking themselves. However, it is not nearly as rampant as in Colon or Piña. A university faculty leader described Achiote's situation like this:

> Achiote right now, it seems so small and innocent. But for what's innocent, there
> are people there that are involved in the change and stuff and I understand that
> they want to put on their best face. I mean, I don't always talk to the students
> about this stuff (Robert).

The stuff he doesn't mention to his students is the drug trafficking and prostitution in other parts of the country, like Panama City and Colon. He specifically referred to the unfinished high rise buildings in Panama City that are known to be products of drug money. He continued,

> So that kind of stuff, the people of Achiote don't particularly like to talk about it
> too much (Robert).

Although they may not talk about it all the time, they know it exists. The people of Achiote are not naïve to the potential issues and influences of Colon. Almost everyone frequents Colon to buy supplies or groceries or en route elsewhere in Panama. They know there is gang violence. They know there is drug trafficking. Although much of the rest of Panama is cut off from Achiote, Achiote is not necessarily completely cut off from the rest of Panama. An Achiote community resident described the change coming to his community:

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I believe we are going to see more because there will be more roads and more

transit and more danger and more of everything. More people will mix things up

here. For now, it's calm and peaceful. But there could be more cars, more

delinquency, more of everything. Lots of people will come from the city and be

here, drug trafficking, everything. (Lucas, Ap. II, no. 11)

A further twist in the future development and livelihood change of Achiote is the

burgeoning tourism industry and the recent global recognition of Panama as a top tourism

destination.

Tourism Development in Panama

In 2012, *The New York Times* ranked Panama as the top destination in the world

(Williams, 2012). *National Geographic* included Panama among their 2012 destinations for the

Best of the World list (National Geographic, 2012). To say the tourism industry in Panama is

growing rapidly is an understatement. An ecotourism professional in Panama described the

transformation in the way travel to Panama is perceived internationally.

Now it's the American traveler telling the American traveler, "Oh, Panama's

awesome! It's really safe? Oh my god, it's so safe." So now it's the people over

there saying, "It's fine, I can just rent a car, or I can just get around by bus. Oh,

the planes are really cheap? I can just get a guide book and go? Oh my gosh, oh

okay" (David).

In his description, he is specifically referring to the perceptions of Panama as a safe and

viable tourism destination. For the most part, it is and the government has put policies in place to

capitalize on their growth in the tourism industry, particularly regarding mass tourism

infrastructure development and the growing population of retirees from the US (Jackiewicz &

Craine, 2010).

Panama is trying to situate itself as an attractive place for investors, including foreign

homeowners, by creating a highly favorable tax climate (Jackiewicz & Craine, 2010). In a report

by a Panamanian real estate promotion company, as of 2007 there were 107 residential towers of

at least 20 stories under construction in Panama City, each worth approximately US$3.2 billion

(see Lakshamanan, 2007). Jackiewicz and Craine analyzed the increasing numbers of North

Americans, and particularly United States citizens, inhabiting Panama, their activities as retirees,

part-time residents, tourists, and investors, and their potential for equitable, sustainable growth in

Panama. They argue that because of Panama's high level of dependency on foreign investors,

foreign tourists, and foreign-born residents, their model of development could be a bellweather

for other similarly highly dependent countries around the globe. Referring to the speed of change

and transaction in Panama, "things are moving too fast – the available commodities are

increasingly valorized so there is little time for contemplation of effect because of the

desperation to keep pace with something that is always on the verge of disappearing"

(Jackiewicz & Craine, 2010, p. 9). This statement could be used as a bellweather for the change

coming to Achiote as well.

An ecotourism professional explained that tourism became a popular industry in Panama

only since the mid-1990s. He repeatedly stated that people had to see the Canal before it fell into

Panamanian hands:

The tourism profession in Panama is also new. It started in the mid-90s, like 1995,

because the gossip was come see the Canal before it goes into the Panamanians

hands, and so a lot of people came to Panama to see the Canal before it was wasted, destroyed (Rafael).

At the same time, Costa Rica was emerging as the global example of sustainable tourism and ecotourism. It was becoming more developed and subsequently expensive to vacation there. Early adapters began to look for alternatives. Panama is able to provide similar natural resources at a much lower cost and less developed for tourists than Costa Rica. A Panamanian ecotourism operator explains the transition in tourists' interest from Costa Rica to Panama:

We have the Canal and we have the culture and now we have all this rich area that was not explored, which is our nature, our natural habitat that we have here. Different than say, when you go to Costa Rica, and you go to the common place, the common parks, like Cocobella, La Selva, Manuel Antonio, and all those places. They're most of the time packed with people. So in terms of trying to make an area protected from being lumbered or being hunted or being destroyed, now [Costa Rica] didn't do research in terms of how many guests could that area hold before being destroyed. What we did in Panama was first this study of what was the capacity of this trail could sustain and before it could collapse. So we did that study first. Since Panama is not normally well known worldwide we don't have this massive visitors to areas like Achiote, areas as Pipeline, areas as Darien, and obviously Darien, for bird watchers is the mecca for bird watchers (Rafael).

Panama is able to learn from Costa Rica's success and challenges. They learned from the crowded national parks and methods of tourism development. However, a combination of Panama's legacy of business culture associated with the Canal and a desire to separate their tourism identity from Costa Rica has resulted in a focus on mass tourism development. Many of

the incentives for tourism development focus on increasing the quantity of visitors and mass tourism rather than sustainable tourism or other forms of alternative tourism. For example, an ecotourism professional told me that Panama assumed much of the tourism industry for cruise ships and conferences previously held in the United States after the attacks in 2001. The US imposed stricter barriers to enter the country, so many cruise ships and conferences that were held there had to move elsewhere. Panama imposed incentives to acquire this sector. The ecotourism professionals I interviewed for this study believe that the direction that Panama has taken in tourism is completely the wrong direction.

One of the ecotourism professionals discussed in length of how tourism in Panama is focused volume and mass travel, that they want to show numbers of tourists. He thinks that it's going to continue to get worse because the influential people are only interested in generating money. He continued to say that people are realizing that there is money to be made and that led to the focus on the cruise ship industry, and the

> large hotels and big buses rather than something that's small and sustainable that
>
> can be run by a community or a cooperative of something like that (David).

Nevertheless, today the tourism industry is booming in Panama. However, it is tourism that is booming, not necessarily ecotourism or sustainable tourism. Infrastructure developments associated with the Panama Canal and Panama's burgeoning tourism industry bring implications of livelihood change and development in the region of Costa Abajo.

Livelihood Resources, Change, and Tourism: The People Arrive Here Like Birds

Volunteer tourism is not part of the tourism industry that is booming either. Volunteer tourism is relatively scarce and not nearly as widespread in relation to some other developing

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countries, particularly its neighbor to the north, Costa Rica. An ecotourism professional reflected on the nature of tourism in Panama:

> But I think that that element is lacking a lot of tourism in Panama, that whole idea
> of giving back, of sharing, of caring, there's a lot of that that's not a part of it.
> And I think as much as one would try to preach that whole concept, I don't think
> we're doing it. I honestly don't think we're getting to that point where we really
> connect with Panama. We're not connecting them to Panama (David).

Keese (2011) found in a review of website postings among the twelve volunteer tourism sending organizations that comprise the International Volunteer Programs Association, Panama is ranked fifteenth among Latin American countries and tied for thirty-sixth place globally. But for one week a year, it exists in the form of university students building ecotourism development projects in Achiote.

> The people arrive here like the birds. They live here for a moment, find food here,
> stay here. They come down, relax, eat, and stay. And I feel like the birds are the
> same thing. This brings me happiness for sure. (Yamileth, Ap. II, no 12).

Yamileth, one of the most active women in Los Rapaces, used this metaphor to describe tourists as the migratory birds that pass through the valley in Achiote. I wish I could have been present for the initial trainings that formed the basis of this connection and understanding. In her description of the connection between the birds and the tourists, she worries that both will not return, and that the absence of birds means an absence of tourists. Her use of this metaphor is descriptive of her internalized connection of the natural resource base as the primary attraction for tourists. She mentioned a particular fruit that the birds eat. ANAM developed a program in Achiote that gives money to the people that plant these trees on their land.

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Because they want food, because they always have come to Panama, and when

they don't find any food, and if they cannot find food, they die of hunger. They

don't have strength to return. Here in Panama there are many projects to produce

plants because the birds need more food (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 13).

Yamileth continued her conceptual link to the construction of the restaurant, photos of

which are displayed in Figure 4.3. When there wasn't a restaurant and they weren't able to

quickly serve food to travelers, the travelers passed through without stopping. The restaurant

allowed them to prepare more food for the people. She mentioned early in the interview that

before the restaurant was built and before CEASPA trained Los Rapaces as an ecotourism group,

she didn't have a profession to speak of, that she hadn't finished school. The restaurant provides

her with not only income for her family, but a sense of purpose, quality of life, and livelihood.

She stated over and over that she likes to attend to the people, to cook, and to serve the people

that come to the restaurant.

Figure 4.3. Photographs of the restaurant built in Achiote as part of the community ecotourism initiative with CEASPA and USAID

Additionally, Yamileth's children have benefitted greatly from CEASPA's involvement.

Her son, Lucas, works for CEASPA as the caretaker of the Centro Tucán. Lucas started working

for CEASPA after he showed promise as a future leader in the community. In one of his interviews, he reflected about the change in livelihood that working for CEASPA has provided him.

> I like this because, in part, because I live here and I work close to here. And that I learn different things, because my profession is electricity, but I didn't like it. I studied and started to work with CEASPA. I didn't know anything about ecotourism, nothing. But yes, I like it because CEASPA worked with issues of culture, organic agriculture, home gardening, and issues of biology. I like animals, plants, and I learned a lot, many things. In high school I never used a computer, never, never in my life. And here I learned [to use] the computer, to use a microscope. Here we have a microscope. And many people from Canada, from the United States, from Europe, good people. From all of these places they come here, from local guide organizations, institutions, they come from exchanges from ANAM, from various provinces. I know many people (Lucas, Ap. II, no. 14).

Greater opportunity for people in Achiote is not solely dependent on those who have benefitted from CEASPA's involvement. People have more money in Achiote than they used to and more people attain their livelihoods from employment elsewhere, mostly in Colon. Her other children have more diverse work opportunities. She said,

> I feel good because they are not only at home (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 15).

They are able to work and make money outside the house.

Although gender roles are still not equal, as is also the case in the United States, more women hold jobs and the role of women in the home is changing. One day, I was sitting in the

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restaurant and Florencia's niece was getting married the next day. The people were having a conversation about how now it's better to wait longer to get married and to have fewer children. They were talking about how it used to be that everyone had as many children as they could to help work on the farm. They don't believe that this should be the case anymore. With fewer children, I remember them saying, you can provide a better life for your children and provide them with more care and opportunities.

I also know that watching the female student volunteers perform physical labor in the construction of the projects has had an impact on the perception of what women can do. Although the women in Achiote do not perform the physical labor, I know it has made an impact on both women and men. A woman in Los Rapaces noticed that the men and women work together to construct the volunteer projects.

It's joyful. They all work so much every day, the men, the women, all are equal (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 16).

"A basic ethical question we confront in qualitative tourism research is, why does difference often mean inequality and domination rather than co-operation and survival?" (Swain, 2004, p. 103). Swain (2004) suggested that tourism studies can be a vehicle for transforming power dynamics and difference to promotion of diversity and richness. Achiote is a diverse community. Although they are socially and otherwise connected by living in a rural village, many ethnic backgrounds are represented. However, a diversion existed in conversations about racism. In Achiote, almost everyone told me that racism does not matter because the cultures are so intermixed and have been for a long time. In Panama City, people openly talked with me about how racism was a problem, specifically referring to immigrant Asians and populations of

African descent. However, in Achiote the ability to dance the African native Congo is respected. Although racism is not a major theme in this study, the difference in views on the subject highlights diversity rather than a unified Other.

Los Rapaces: Ecotourism in Achiote

Los Rapaces believes tourism is something that will advance the community. As a whole, Los Rapaces prides themselves on helping other people and caring for their community and the environment. The president of Los Rapaces described his vision to me:

> A vision for me is that they [people in the community] have the support they truly need. To me, no, no, I don't have interest so much in money. My interest is not so much in money, but as the other person. I am really interested in the person, for the person to feel good, that another is helping you to have an economic entry…In this group I feel happy. To make a change for difference, to live something impressive, because the person was below, but now is above (Ricardo, Ap. II, no. 17).

They hope that the tourists learn and enjoy the natural environment they have and the culture of Achiote. They hope that the tourists feel happy and content, enjoy themselves, and experience the respect they receive from Los Rapaces. For these reasons, they hope tourists stay in Achiote. Ricardo continued explaining his wishes for the way he hopes tourists experience their time in Achiote.

> And when they leave, they saw us work together, oh wow, how interesting. In the time you spent in Panama, primarily in the very small community of Achiote, they treated each other well, loving people, caring for you, everything pretty.

Interesting, huh? This is important to me. Money is a material thing that can be taken away, but friendship, service, you cannot take these things away…and afterward we are friends, this is worth something to me. It's interesting serving someone and that person feels satisfied with you (Ricardo, Ap. II, no. 18).

The projects completed by the students have helped Los Rapaces gain autonomy as an ecotourism group. A member of Los Rapaces highlights their reliance on the volunteer projects in order for them to grow as an ecotourism group:

We couldn't grow without the help of [the university student volunteer groups]. They made the bird watching platforms, the trail about coffee, the museum. Many things that we have that attract tourists are because of the students from [the university]. So now we have many, many things for you all (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 19).

The existing infrastructure and services for tourism in Achiote are mostly the projects completed by CEASPA and the university volunteer projects over the years, the migratory birds and natural beauty in the area, and the restaurant run by Los Rapaces. The presence of the student volunteers not only help build physical capacity for Los Rapaces, they also provide an income earning opportunity for the group. When the students come for the one week in March, they provide much of the operating finances for Los Rapaces for the rest of the year. Fifteen to twenty people eat in the restaurant for every meal in addition to their normal customer intake, they take advantage of ecotourism opportunities in other communities in the region, and strengthen Los Rapaces' notoriety and recognition as an ecotourism group.

At this point, Los Rapaces knows that their capacity is limited and they are a small community in the beginning stages of ecotourism development. However, they believe that their assets of culture and ability to be a community filled with respect and care for each other and the tourists sets them apart. They believe their love of their *tranquilo* and *cariñoso* (caring) community coupled with their abundant natural resource base and biodiversity will provide opportunity in tourism and subsequently help themselves and their neighbors.

This was definitely my experience. One day in the restaurant, my research assistant and I were finishing our dinners and talking to Yamileth before we turned in for the night. A late customer pulled up, and happened to work for ARAP, the Panamanian Authority for Aquatic Resources. We were talking with Yamileth about how the next day was my assistant's 22nd birthday. He immediately asked if we had any plans for dinner. We said that we were most likely going to eat at the restaurant, like every night. This is mostly because selection at the only walk-in store in town is predominantly chips, peanut butter, beer, or sardines. The man from ARAP headed over to his truck and pulled out a large black garbage bag that clearly had something in it. He reached deep into the bag and pulled out one of the largest, spiniest lobsters I had ever seen. He said, "You should have this for dinner!" He handed the lobster to Yamileth to prepare for the birthday dinner.

When we were getting ready for dinner the next day (meaning putting on the least sweat soaked t-shirt available), Lucas arrived at the Centro and said that we had to go to the restaurant right then. When we arrived at the restaurant, it was packed with our new friends in this tiny community. Yamileth had given the lobster to her close friend and neighbor, and she prepared a community pot with the lobster fit to feed half the town. The meal was held in one of the largest cast iron pots I've ever seen. On top of that, three people brought cakes! Ricardo bought one

from Colon, and it actually said, "Happy Birthday Emily," which is indicative of how well they were able to tell us apart. Both Juan and Yamileth made traditional cakes as well. Yamileth led the prayer as we all stood hand in hand in a circle around the restaurant, blessing our arrival in Achiote and thanking God that they could substitute as her family on her birthday.

In my journey through this study, and particularly in my first few weeks in Achiote, I often found myself being critical of the sincerity of the people when they called the student volunteers that come for one week a year family. However, I learned what life is like in a place that's *tranquilo* and where people *tratar bien*. I believe that these factors provide a solid foundation for ecotourism development in Achiote. I mentioned earlier that Achiote is not utopic, and it is important to realistically situate ecotourism development and volunteer tourism in Achiote.

Barriers to Ecotourism in Achiote

When CEASPA was forming the ecotourism development group, Los Rapaces, in Achiote, they decided to extend the namesake of the village of Achiote to the title of the project, "Making Achiote a Bird and Birder Friendly Community." Their reasoning for doing so is best described by a look at the map below. Achiote Road is already known around the world as one of the premier places in the world for bird watchers. Achiote Road is the road between the Gatun Locks and the community of Achiote that passes through San Lorenzo National Park. Tourism is scarce in Achiote, and tourists do not usually arrive there unless the tourist is particularly adventurous, escorted by a tour operator, or lost. In the entire nine weeks I spent in Achiote, the only tourist I encountered that was not accompanied by a hired tour operator was a lost Australian. He found me because someone told him there was a *gringa* living in the next town

over that could give him directions back over the Canal. The majority of tourists that do arrive in the area are there for the purpose of seeing birds. For birders especially, a guide is necessary for help spotting and identifying the birds in the dense tropical forest. Moreover, many of the trained bilingual guides live in Panama City, therefore diverting any influx of direct local economic benefits out of Achiote.

Figure 4.4. Map of Achiote and San Lorenzo (Birdwatching Panama, 2007)

As tourists, birders are a very particular niche in that they are extremely goal-oriented during their trip. Birders care about seeing birds. In many cases, they are less interested, if interested at all, in local cultures and experiences. They tend to spend less money and time in local communities. If given the opportunity to dine in a local restaurant, for example Restaurante

Cascá in Achiote, they may believe they are forgiving their opportunity to see a bird they have been desperately searching for on their species list. Instead, the birder was dining in a local restaurant. The birder missed the bird. An ecotourism operator describes birding tourists this way:

> Some birders don't even eat their own food because they're so focused on their goals. That's…one of the main challenges that I see long term for the community is that it sounds like they're moving away from this kind of birding thing being their focus. That's the way they started which is fine, but birders are a peculiar bunch and they don't really care about your community, and not to be rude about birders but they're a very targeted typed of tourism. They're a very specific niche, where they're going to be focused 100% on their goals (Kurt).

If a tourist travels to Colon Province and is interested in the local culture and opportunities available, the tourist will most likely go to Costa Arriba where there are resorts and Portobelo National Park. Portobelo National Park is more widely known as a tourist destination because Costa Arriba is more accessible to tourists and more developed. When visiting Portobelo, tourists do not have to cross the Canal and wait for the drawbridge to get to it.

If a tourist wants to make the effort to travel across the Canal to Costa Abajo, the tourist will most likely visit San Lorenzo National Park, Achiote Road, and Fort San Lorenzo. In order to do this, the tourist does not need to go to Achiote. Achiote is not a gateway community to San Lorenzo. This is a misconception I had about the area before I arrived for the first time. In my first meeting with CEASPA before getting to Achiote, one of them described their situation like this:

You never make it to Achiote. You never see any community. You never have to

talk to anybody from the local area. It's as though there's nobody there. Now

some people like to go bird watching and not see any local people, you know,

because they're interested in the birds, right? Or they actually like to go here [Fort

San Lorenzo], and it's wonderful and it's marvelous and it's actually very nice

(Amelia).

Achiote's location limits connection to tourists coming to the area, as does their lack of

infrastructure for communication and reaching tourists through marketing or otherwise. Without

internet, postal services, and reliable cellular service, all of the communication and marketing to

receive tourists passes through CEASPA. A woman at CEASPA tried to set up a marketing plan

for Achiote and ecotourism in the area. She created lists of contacts and spent quite a bit of time

developing the plan. However, as a CEASPA representative recalls, implementation of the plan

still posed difficulties.

She had great lists of all the people who should come, a marketing plan for

Achiote, and so on. It was fantastic. Well, who is going to implement it? Well,

there's no email. There's no internet. There's barely any cell phone coverage.

When we started there, there was one public telephone that was usually not

working, and one place in the middle of the road opposite the church where

sometimes you could get cell phone coverage (Amelia).

In the past few decades, the economic structure of the region was changed dramatically

as a result of increased communication and transportation with the introduction of cell phones

and a paved road. Economic opportunities and challenges are also highly influenced by levels of

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education, which have been enhanced in recent years as well. However, many factors still hinder Achiote in the context of ecotourism development, specifically English education programs, tour guide training for Los Rapaces, and the ability to host cross-cultural groups without a translator. In Panama, it is nearly impossible to make a living from tourism without speaking English, or at least another language aside from Spanish. Economic capacity and opportunities for ecotourism development in Achiote, therefore, are linked to education and cross-cultural capabilities. The woman in Los Rapaces continued about the children in Achiote learning to be in the tourism industry.

> There are many young people here in the community that study tourism. With this, one day it could be good, that people come to the community, groups, people that are going to demand tourism guides. English is also necessary to have a group. There is always someone to translate, but this is nothing if you don't know how to speak [English] well (Yamileth, Ap. II, no 20).

During my time in Achiote, I was asked by a few of the children to help with their English homework. This information, of course, was dispersed quickly in the school and soon I was paid visits for homework help by as many as fifteen students a day. When I examined their English lessons, I was appalled at the lessons assigned at each grade level. I couldn't even figure out their lessons, not one of them to completeness, and I am finishing an advanced degree and English is my first language! One of the lessons referred to John F. Kennedy and the Eiffel Tower and Mount Rushmore all in the same exercise, assuming prior knowledge and context of each to be able to finish the lesson. The children in Achiote do not have the internet at their fingertips to help them figure out the context. CEASPA employees are also appalled by the

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English program. I remember a little boy telling me "good morning" in the evening. He knew it was a greeting, but did not know the context.

In tourism and in Panama, the ability to speak English is directly associated with economic opportunities. It is possible to make money without speaking English, but it is much easier to obtain higher positions with it. I was told by many people in Panama that I could easily get a good job in any field I choose because I speak English and Spanish. A CEASPA representative discussed the English program in the schools:

> [The English program] is not for the community, it's so that there's more money for the big hotels! So that the people who make the beds can say hello to the guests. That's what it's for, it's not to promote the autonomous capabilities in the people and if that might help the local people to get better jobs in guiding. Ask them to talk any English, ask if the kids in the schools are taught any English! And supposedly everybody learns English nowadays. Panama's education system is so bad (Amelia).

The English teacher for the school commutes from Colon and teaches every grade. Although the education system needs much improvement, it is much better now than it was in the past. The children now have opportunities to leave and study elsewhere.

Florencia mentioned the benefits the ecotourism and coffee groups have brought to the community. She says that Los Rapaces has the capacity to grow as an ecotourism group and the people in it are the foundation. However, the foundation of Los Rapaces is older and not many of the children want to continue it. They were also not old enough to participate in the initial trainings, leaving Los Rapaces to train them with little resources or knowledge of training others.

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Only recently they were the trainees. Los Rapaces has a group of young people that were trained as birding guides. But, she says,

> they can leave for other things. It's not sufficient (Florencia, Ap. II, no. 21).

The youth goes on to study other things. The ability to speak English is a challenge for Los Rapaces as well. They are unable to host groups that do not speak Spanish or have their own interpreter. A faculty leader from the university described the students' ability to speak Spanish as a divide between the group, between those who could communicate and those who could not. He noted that although there was a terrific effort between Los Rapaces and the students to communicate through other means, such as hand motions and body language, the students with the ability to speak Spanish gained more from the experience because of their ability to understand more.

Additionally, no tourism manual about Panama ever mentions Achiote as a community to visit. The only mention is of Achiote Road. In fact, the first Lonely Planet guide for Panama actually deterred tourists from visiting Costa Abajo other than San Lorenzo and Achiote Road. It stated that there are no restaurants, no banks, and no hotels. Don't even bother. This is still mostly true. There is one restaurant, Restaurante Cascá, and a dormitory-style community center for accommodations, El Centro el Tucán.

When talking to an ecotourism operator in Panama who currently takes groups to Achiote, he described his reservations of staying overnight in Achiote:

> Lodging is one. Where are you going to stay? That's the biggest thing over there.
> Because if I go to Achiote and I want to do some birding over there, where do I
> spend the night? That's the big one. And I think that I told [CEASPA], I told

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[CEASPA], look, that dormitory lodging that you have over there, that can work

for some people. But it does not work for the people I work with…But I said,

look, the dorm is a great concept if you have schools coming through. And I

would be more than happy to stay there if I had a school group to stay there,

because I think that there's enough to do in that area. But the thing is that if

you're talking about somebody who's looking for something a little bit more, and

I'm not even talking about someone who is wealthy, but I'm talking about

someone that wants basic comforts. You know, you've gotta start with that. And

then you may have something (David).

Until this year, the Centro Tucán was the only accommodation available for travelers

through the region of Costa Abajo in Colon Province. A CEASPA employee remembers that

although the Centro Tucán may appear boring and not very comfortable with its bunk-style

accommodations,

When it was built the people were amazed. We had the only flush toilet for years,

an indoor shower, a bed to yourself, these are things we take for granted. People

in the community do not (Amelia).

It has a small kitchen, an office with an extensive library about the projects and initiatives

in the area, and a large meeting room. The Centro Tucán was built to serve as accommodations

and a community meeting place. It was my accommodations when I was there, and I have stayed

in other places that are much worse. In my experience, it was primarily used as a place for school

children to do group projects and print papers for school since most of the community does not

have personal computers. It can host up to 20 visitors at a time. The Centro Tucán is an

appropriate accommodation for hosting volunteer or student groups, but not ideal for families or tourists looking for more comfortable accommodations. Before the student volunteers started constructing ecotourism-related infrastructure, there were no ecotourism services or activities in Achiote either.

The Impacts of Volunteer Tourism in Achiote:
Lessons from a Long-term Collaborative Partnership

The following three stories highlight key issues of a small rural community hosting volunteers for only one week a year. Although this chapter has provided diverse and wide-ranging perspectives and visions of the stakeholders involved in this partnership for volunteer tourism, the stories below focus on issues surrounding volunteer tourism specifically. They bring forth assets, challenges, and lessons learned from this long-term collaborative partnership for volunteer tourism. Each year they learn more about project management, activities and opportunities to provide for the students, and build capacity for the future. The following stories address the first research question of the perspectives and visions of volunteer tourism stakeholders involved in a long-term collaborative partnership. They also highlight key findings of this study associated with the central component of the sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism, the institutional processes and organizational structures.

The Impact of an Incomplete Project: The Restaurant in Escobal

Residents of surrounding communities see the benefits realized by the projects completed by the volunteers and naturally desire to gain similar benefits themselves. They want the volunteers to do projects in their communities as well. They want a restaurant to provide jobs

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and bring tourists and economic resources to their community. Ricardo even expressed that people want him to give them money to start a restaurant. A CEASPA representative said,

> I know I have been there when people from Chagres have been, and they are very envious of the tourism infrastructure that Achiote has and they don't (Amelia).

Chagres is a small coastal town less than a half hour drive from Achiote in Costa Abajo. I was told of similar requests of Los Rapaces by almost every surrounding community in the region. They host several tours for the student volunteers, but the student volunteers stay in Achiote and so do the projects for ecotourism development.

Although Ricardo wants to include people from other communities, he is hesitant because of his experience with the volunteer project in Escobal. The only volunteer project that was not completed was the first attempt of Los Rapaces to work with another ecotourism group in Escobal. Escobal is a larger town than Achiote in Costa Abajo on the shores of Lake Gatun. Several people in Escobal formed an ecotourism group after seeing the benefits Achiote was receiving from CEASPA and the student volunteer projects. They wanted to benefit from these as well. Los Rapaces worked with the group in Escobal to send the volunteer project to them. One of the goals of Los Rapaces is to work together with other communities for regional cohesion and poverty alleviation. None of the projects have left Achiote since their attempt to work with the group of Escobal.

The volunteer project in 2010 was to build a restaurant in the neighboring town of Escobal. This project was unique among the others in that it took place in another community and it was the first time Los Rapaces branched out to work with the newly formed ecotourism group in Escobal. This project conjured issues that had not occurred in previous projects among

the student group and also between the group in Escobal and Los Rapaces. The project was unable to be completed. Building a restaurant in a week is ambitious, however it was the first time the students had not completed the project. Incomplete project work affected the relationships among and between every part of the partnership. When the project was under construction and the students were working on it, the student volunteers' inability to complete the restaurant affected the dynamics of the student group. A faculty leader of the project described the rift this caused between the students this way:

> Actually that trip kind of built up to a boiling point where we were supposed to, the whole group have a boat ride to the beach. Then there were a few students that felt that we hadn't accomplished enough and they started dividing up a little bit…into a subculture of what we would call the purists that were working much more, much harder that were also sort of, a little bit looking down on those that didn't. But like I said, there was nobody that I looked at that didn't and thought, this is a lazy person and they're not taking this seriously (Robert).

He said that the incomplete construction of the restaurant caused a boiling point later in the week. The student and faculty leaders had to address the group about what to do about the divide in the group. The team discussed the structural issues of some of the students returning to the restaurant to work on it instead of accompanying the rest of the group on the boat tour. They didn't have enough tools for the entire group to work simultaneously. The entire group going to work instead of going on the boat tour would result in some of the group standing around. He continued:

And the thing I emphasized in that was that part of what we're doing here is that

yes, the manual labor is important, but also we're acting as ambassadors and

building this relationship. And part of what Los Rapaces wants to do is try out

some of these different ecotourism ideas. They want to do the bird watching.

They want to do the boat rides, because it gives them practice. Because in the end

they're not going to be construction people, they want to be hosts for ecotourism

so this gives us the opportunity to be ecotourists and get to do that. They're very

proud of their area (Robert).

The group decided to split up for the day so some students could return to the restaurant

and work and the rest would go on the boat tour. The agreement among the group was that those

students that returned to the restaurant would not look down on the rest of the group that

participated in the boat ride.

The ecotourism group in Escobal promised to complete the restaurant. They did not. In a

reflection with Los Rapaces about the volunteers after the construction of the cabin, Ricardo

called the experience *bonito*, *bueno*, and *feo*. Beautiful, good, and ugly. It was beautiful because

he said they had the best group of volunteers that particular year than they had received in all the

years previous. There was a wonderful exchange between them and they enjoyed each other very

much. It was good because all of the ecotourism activities, the project, and planning went

smoothly. The previous year, one of the boats sunk during their boat tour, leaving half of the

group and several members of Los Rapaces to swim to shore in Lake Gatun. They don't use that

boat tour service anymore. But this year, everything went according to plan without many

mishaps.

It was ugly because he is still upset with the group in Escobal for not completing the restaurant. He said about Escobal,

It's been two years since the restaurant project in Escobal, but it is still the same.
It makes me sad because everything is important to me. This is the part that is
ugly (Ricardo, Ap. II, no. 22).

They paid Escobal money from the students to build the restaurant. They provided the resources and the labor for the initial construction, but the group in Escobal did not finish it. The students worked incredibly hard and Escobal was supposed to finish it. They didn't. The restaurant remains at the exact point of construction as the last day the volunteers worked on it, although now the tropical vegetation has crept in and is beginning to deteriorate the structure. A trip to Escobal is no longer included in the tours Los Rapaces provides for the student volunteers. Ricardo does not want the volunteers to see that the work they put in for that project remains incomplete and unutilized.

The first story about an incomplete project demonstrates the impact of volunteer tourism in two key ways. First it brings Achiote into the context in the greater region of Costa Abajo and second the story highlights issues in the partnership in the short-term and long-term. The impacts of volunteer tourism in a particular rural community reach beyond those involved in the collaborative partnership to the surrounding communities. Additionally, short-term issues of inter-group dynamics arose when the project wasn't completed. The long-term effects of the incomplete project resonate still and impact perceptions within the collaborative partnership.

Rehabilitation vs. Construction

The volunteer project the next year, 2011, was to repair the trails leading to the bird watching platforms. Over the years, the rain had scattered and deteriorated the original trail and it became difficult to climb. It was the first year the volunteers did not have a structure to build themselves. I talked to a CEASPA representative that has not worked in Achiote since the initial community development projects associated with San Lorenzo about this project. She was surprised that the repair and rehabilitation of the existing projects was approved as the volunteer project for that year. She said,

> This is a completely different thing, not building something new, but repairing
>
> what someone else did. Well, we obviously live in the tropics, the conditions in
>
> which the structure has to survive is important…you have to look at, well we did
>
> it in the first place, why hasn't the community maintained it? (Amelia).

A faculty leader of the groups echoed this comment, stressing the importance of building something physical for the students to be proud of as an important factor in students' derived satisfaction from the project. However, she slightly diverted the issue by mentioning the importance of consulting the community about their needs regarding project decisions, but then noting the importance of a physical project for the students' sense of accomplishment and ability to translate their work into the greater context of the community:

> It's asking the community, what is it that you need and that's doable in a short
>
> amount of time, and what supplies does it require, like all of those pieces that's
>
> both beneficial to a group of students who for some it may be their first time
>
> serving and so they need to be able to see that they accomplished something, it's

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not enough to be able to be you know, it's this wonderful experience, and they

started on this area, but they can't see the change, and so like the very hands-on

projects allow them to say, one, I accomplished something, but at the same time

to have it in the context of this is a functioning business and a functioning

community that comes alongside, and is doing this on their own, a you're getting

to be a part of what they're doing (Katie).

Los Rapaces was well aware that the students were repairing instead of building

something new. Both CEASPA and Los Rapaces were worried the student volunteers wouldn't

derive the same benefits, experience, and satisfaction from repairing a trail instead of, for

example, building a community museum about growing coffee like the Casa Museo project

several years before. Yamileth, the most active woman in Los Rapaces, said that it worries her

that the student volunteers don't think badly of them because they did not maintain the trail.

The wood is damaged [on the bird watching platforms] and the rocks of the trail

are scattered. It distresses me and embarrasses me because others had to put other

wood [on the platform] and rocks on the trail. We cannot take care of it because

we don't have the materials and we can't pay for them. I started to maintain it, but

when the people with the wood came, it wasn't good wood and the rain destroyed

it (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 23).

She doesn't want the students to think that they don't care about or value the projects and

the work they do,

also like the restaurant in Escobal (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 24).

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She said the restaurant in Escobal still needs a roof, bathrooms, a kitchen. They quit. The people are not moving with the construction there. The lack of capacity and resources to maintain the previous volunteer projects gives her the same heartache as the incomplete restaurant in Escobal, but she doesn't want to call attention to it.

The third story of the cabana the following year, 2012, highlights the capacity of Los Rapaces and Achiote to host volunteer projects and all the preparation and planning that is involved with hosting only 20 student volunteers for one week.

The Cabana: What is the measure of a successful project?

Before I traveled to Achiote for the first time, a woman at Alternative Breaks told me that she felt like they had saturated opportunities for new projects in Achiote. The two previous years had been the incomplete restaurant in Escobal and the reparation of the trails and bird watching platforms. They thought they were going to have to either move the students to a different location or change the projects entirely. I arrived in June 2011 after the reparation project in March. When I talked to Ricardo about his plans for the coming project, for March 2012, he told me about his idea for the cabana. I thought it was perfect, particularly in the sense that building a new accommodation for tourists can provide income opportunities for them in ecotourism aside from the restaurant. It also gave the students something to build and appreciate. The idea behind the cabana was to house more particular tourists who may not desire to stay in the community center, which has dormitory-style accommodations.

The first night the student volunteers arrived in Achiote, Ricardo explained his vision for the cabana and for the future of Los Rapaces. As I understand it, it was one of the first times Los Rapaces had explicitly described their intentions for the work the student volunteers do at the

beginning of their time in the community. It was well received by the student volunteers and helped them internalize their efforts throughout the rest of the week. A student leader reflected on Ricardo's speech at the beginning of their project:

> And it was really cool to hear that, that nothing had to do with a profit or anything like that, but it was about living and it was about family and community and it was really cool for all of us to hear that. And I think that because our participants were already really starting to feel that really strong connection to Achiote, and then hearing, this is your house, you can come stay in it whenever you want, we were like, wow, let's build it! So it really drove home that connection, between our participants and the people in the community which was awesome (Lacey).

In the reflections with Los Rapaces and later the student leaders after the cabana project, everyone celebrated that particular project to be the most successful. The boats didn't sink on the river tour, the project was something to be built rather than repair, and although the students were unable to complete the construction of the cabana in their short visit to Achiote, they received the earnest promise from Ricardo that he would finish it. He has.

The story of the cabana comes with a caveat. It was a successful project overall, perhaps the most successful. However when I arrived again the week before the student volunteers to observe the preparation processes of Los Rapaces, the community, and CEASPA for the students' arrival, I witnessed how much work and effort and input is required to prepare for the student volunteer projects.

The Cabana Caveat: Ricardo in the Forest to Take Out Wood

When I arrived in March the week before the students came for their volunteer work, I had my first interaction with Ricardo, Juan, Lucas, and Yamileth. I immediately expressed that I wanted to do everything I could to accompany them in their preparation of the arrival of the student volunteers. Within hours, I immediately remembered why it was so difficult to accomplish research goals the first time around. I woke up early the next morning to help out in any way I could. I didn't have a phone at this point. I hurried down to the restaurant to see what I could do. Yamileth informed me that Juan had gone to Colon to get lifejackets for the students' boat tour, and Ricardo had gone to San Lorenzo to take out wood. Ricardo had gone to San Lorenzo to take out wood? I know he knows it's illegal to cut down trees in a national park. What could he be doing to take out wood? And for what? Two disappointingly unproductive days later, meaning that no one was letting me help them, I found Ricardo.

"Ricardo, please let me help you take out wood in San Lorenzo tomorrow." And just in case he
     didn't understand my accent and limited ability to conjugate hypotheticals, "Can I please
     go with you tomorrow to take out wood?" We were set for 6:30am the next morning.

At 6:45, I was shocked that they were on time. I was expecting to wait at least an hour. They honked the average ten short honks to get me to run out of the Centro and into Ricardo's maroon Saturn, complete with a rosary and dice hanging from the rear view mirror, and an emblem across the top of the windshield reading *eres mi bebe*, you are my baby. He was already blasting *música típico*. Typical. I climbed into the backseat next to Alejandro. Uva and Ricardo were in front.

We ripped around the curves of lush Achiote Road toward the national park. I quickly discovered how much Ricardo slows his dialogue with me. I could barely understand a word of their banter. I gave up for a second and smelled the refreshing mist of morning in the tropical forest. We arrived at San Lorenzo and greeted the park rangers to gather tools, drink coffee, and catch up. I was still learning that sometimes it's easy going and slow, but when it's time to go, it's time to go that very minute. We hopped back in the Saturn and raced through the park. "Mono!" I screamed. I saw a monkey. I'm still a tourist. We arrived at our site to take out wood. I was still wondering with anticipation what "taking out wood" possibly meant. We loaded our arms up with chainsaws, bags, sharpening tools, and water and proceeded to tromp through the dense jungle to our site for the day, and then I saw it. I knew exactly what "taking out wood" meant. Three men armed with two dull, rusted chainsaws were finding fallen trees in the national park, and cutting them into lumber by hand for the cabana. They had been in the forest every day for three weeks doing this.

Ricardo slipped off his shoes and hoisted himself and the chainsaw on top of the fallen log. It must've been three feet in diameter. Balancing atop the massive log, he proceeded to square off the sides and top to prepare to saw it into lumber. This took all morning because the chainsaw's teeth needed sharpening about every ten minutes. This was my job. I was happy to do it, as the rest of the time I was standing back trying not to get blasted in the face by sawdust and bits of flying wood. We didn't use goggles or closed toed shoes or any protective gear for that matter. I didn't say anything. I was just happy to be there and the ability to add something, anything, to my duties of participant observation. Figure 4.3 shows a photographic representation of the process.

Figure 4.3. Photographs of timber making from fallen trees in San Lorenzo National Park (Eddins, 2012).

Once the sides and top of the tree had been squared off and was ready to cut into beams, with brute force and multiple attempts the four of us rolled the log over to even the bottom out. The profanities resonated through the trees at the sight of the bottom of the log. All that work, sweat, sharpening, cutting, time, and energy put in that day, and the log was useless. It had already rotted through. The volunteers were arriving the next week. The men could have reaped the rest of the required timber from this log had it not been hollowed out. We went to the nearby beach to decompress after rendering the day useless.

The cabana was unable to be completed by the student volunteers the next week, not because they didn't have time or manpower to finish it, but because they ran out of supplies.

They didn't have enough lumber. The members of Los Rapaces finished the cabana after the volunteers left, but they were unable to take advantage of the remaining days of free labor, hands, and strength. It was a point of pride and sense of responsibility for the group to finish it. Ricardo does not want the students to think their time and energy was lost on an unfinished product, particularly after their experience with the restaurant in Escobal.

The hollowed log, the lumber source, and the means of producing the lumber for the cabana is indicative of the capacity of the group and the amount of time, effort, and resources put in by the Panamanian partners for a group of volunteers visiting for less than one week a year. Not only do they have to find usable wood that's already fallen and not too degraded, but they also hand cut each board with a chainsaw. No mill, no purchased wood, just three men, two chainsaws, a string soaked in ink to know where to cut, and a lot of time. The input is also not directly seen by the volunteers while they are in Achiote.

The Three Stories: Reflections on Stakeholders in a

Long-term Collaborative Partnership for Volunteer Tourism

These three stories bring forth the long-term impacts of volunteer tourism in Achiote and the varied perceptions and experiences of volunteer tourism stakeholders involved in a long-term collaborative partnership. According to stakeholder theory, it is the "responsibility of managers, and the management function, to 'select activities' to obtain optimal benefits for all identified stakeholder groups, without giving priority to one stakeholder's interests over another" (Sautter & Leisen, 1999, p. 314). This sentiment was brought forth in each of the three stories but in different ways. The first is an example of when the partnership attempted to bring in another partner, the ecotourism group in Escobal, but the group in Escobal did not hold the same level of

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commitment and interest as the primary stakeholders in the partnership. The group wanted to benefit from the partnership without understanding the long-term consequences of bringing in volunteers and not finishing the project. In the second story of rehabilitation and reparation of the trails, the student volunteers did not experience optimal benefits from the project as they did not complete or construct a physical structure. However in volunteer tourism partnerships, while local interests and needs should priority over volunteers' satisfaction with the work, it is similarly important that volunteers derive benefits from their work as "each role is crucial to the performance of the entire tourism system" (Sautter & Leisen, 1999, p. 316).

Because the people in this partnership have been involved with one another for eight years and have plans to continue working with one another, they value each other's perceptions and perspectives of one another. This is particularly the case from the Panamanian partners' side, Los Rapaces and CEASPA. The student and faculty leaders are involved two or more years and move on due to various reasons. Faculty leaders either pursue other research interests or simply do not have time. Student leaders graduate. The student volunteers are new every year. Not one student volunteer has participated in the Alternative Break program more than one year without returning as a student leader.

On the other hand, the Panamanian partners of Los Rapaces and CEASPA have been the same every year. Ricardo and the rest of Los Rapaces have been motivated, committed, and invested in the partnership for the duration. Juan, the primary contact at CEASPA, is the same. In fact, I sometimes wonder if the partnership would be able to continue in the same capacity if not for the devotion of time, resources, and commitment on the Panamanian side. If Juan or Ricardo left and were replaced in their positions, a large amount of training, discussion, and communication would be necessary to continue at the same level of involvement. Referring to

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the importance of genuine interests in effective stakeholder management, Clarkson (1995) cautioned that the removal or failure to participate by even one stakeholder could result in the failure of the functioning of the entire group.

In the third story, multiple factors influenced all stakeholders' perceptions of a successful project. The introduction of the cabana as an income earning opportunity as a project, the discussion of the worth of the project to the volunteers before they started, and the promise of a completed and functioning structure all contributed, among others. Although there was the caveat of the amount of work on the local group's side, everyone regarded the project as successful as all entities in the system benefitted. There was a reported sense of equality and evenly distributed power and benefits.

Because the students are only present in the community for one week per year, the impact of the student's presence in the community is not nearly as great as if there were projects happening year-round. Right now, many people in the town enjoy when the students arrive because their children love it. The students play soccer with them in the street, interact with them, and give the children something to do and be involved in for the week. Additionally, the volunteers provide a source of cash income to the local community, who otherwise rely on subsistence agriculture, small businesses, or holding positions elsewhere. The economic benefit of volunteer tourism was found to be similarly important to local communities in several other studies (e.g. Gray & Campbell, 2008; Wearing, 2001).

Because Achiote is a small rural community with limited capacity to host volunteer tourists and ecotourists, at what point does the presence of volunteers become a burden to a

community? In my first meeting with CEASPA, absorption capacity of Los Rapaces was mentioned:

> You also have to see the absorption capacity of the local group, right? That's really important. You have to look at that. I mean, maybe they couldn't handle any more than they do already! Guess what? They're already running a restaurant. The women are really working incredibly hard already, so what else could they do? (Amelia).

Los Rapaces oversees quite a bit with the restaurant in Achiote. Eight women work in the restaurant at all times when the student volunteers are in Achiote, including Florencia, the woman that left Los Rapaces but helps when the student volunteers are there. Normally, one to three women work at a time. The kitchen is small and overcrowded with more than three people preparing plates, cooking, and serving. The restaurant is already packed most days with people passing through on their way up or down the coast. Yamileth runs the restaurant and takes pride in being able to serve everyone, but she said that some days there are too many people and oh my God, she doesn't have enough! Quite a few people come to the restaurant, and it bothers her when she runs out of food. She doesn't want the people to think badly of her when there isn't any more. She wants all of the people to be content.

In addition to the local interests and the functioning of the partnership for volunteer tourism, in this chapter it was important to recognize that the partnership functions within a much larger system. Government processes and entities such as ANAM and the ATP influence decisions and development in Achiote. The greater tourism system in Panama, including the companies that bring tourists to Achiote, influence processes at the local level. The introduction

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of the paved road in the 1990s and the drawbridge in the future impact the local processes as well. The stakeholders involved in this partnership for volunteer tourism reach far beyond Los Rapaces, CEASPA, Alternative Breaks, the student and faculty leaders, and the student volunteers. Alternately, the presence of the volunteers in Achiote will influence decisions made and local processes in the future.

Because people will come to the community, the next chapter discusses the implications of using a sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism. I discuss the way each component of the framework helps in decision making for the future. Specifically, I address the impacts of livelihood change and development to outline what could happen if a clear plan for sustainable development is not implemented. I outline the visions and goals for the future as expressed by the people that live in Achiote. I then describe recommendations for ecotourism and volunteer tourism as mentioned by the other stakeholders. Finally, I describe my plan for future research in Achiote.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

When I began this study, I set out to better understand volunteer tourism in the context of a sustainable livelihood approach and its associated cross-cultural collaborative processes. What I found was a region of the world with great respect for themselves, each other, and their land and in the face of potential livelihood change and infrastructure development. When I was getting to know the people and places that comprise this study, I became preoccupied with the future of Achiote and the people and everything that inhabits the place, as well as my own ability, or inability, to do anything about the associated social, economic, and environmental implications. I felt stuck and overwhelmed in my analysis, drowned by the complexity and intricacies of what could be. I wanted to extend my arms out of my office in Colorado and wrap them around Achiote and protect them from huge hotels like in Costa Arriba and drug-related gang violence like in Colon. I periodically had to remind myself that I must write this dissertation with the data that I currently have and worry about the future later. I analyzed and wrote about the dynamics of the past and present livelihood sustainability in Achiote in the broader context of impending livelihood change and development.

At this point, change is the only concrete detail about what will ensue in Costa Abajo when the bridge is opened. As Ashley (2000) reminded me, "the impact of change in social capital on sustainable livelihoods is difficult to assess" (p. 17). Even though change is coming, and currently happening, it is impossible to assess what may be. However, there are examples of the effects of the construction and development in other parts of Panama, and there are numerous examples of the effects of large-scale development and tourism seen all over the world that

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provide the vulnerability context of what could happen there. This study has led me from an initial interest in understanding volunteer tourism using a sustainable livelihoods framework as a conceptual and methodological lens to a potentially lifelong research agenda focusing on the changing livelihood structures of Costa Abajo and Achiote.

This chapter has several goals. The first goal is to discuss the implications of using a sustainable livelihoods framework for understanding and explaining volunteer tourism in the context of this study and its applicability to volunteer tourism activities in other places and contexts. The second is to present recommendations and strategies both from the data collected and my own recommendations for the future. The third is to address the implications of the bridge. I do this by providing examples of how construction and infrastructure development are currently affecting other people and places in Panama to highlight the vulnerability context. I then return to Achiote's situation to analyze best and worst case scenarios for the future. I first discuss their resilience to shocks and stresses in the past, and second provide the visions and strategies for the future from the stakeholders interviewed for this study.

This brings me to future implications of how this study can provide an important baseline for further research on sustainable livelihood strategies, ecotourism, and volunteer tourism in the area. I present a clear plan for continuing research in the area derived from the baseline data collected while drawing on the resources of the existing collaborative partnership among the people of Achiote, Los Rapaces, CEASPA, the university, and potential new partners. However, before I get too excited about my return to Achiote, the next sections describe how I have modified and re-modified the sustainable livelihoods framework for an analysis of volunteer tourism in rural poor communities.

The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework for Volunteer Tourism

My aspiration for this framework is that it be used as a tool and guide by other researchers, practitioners, partnerships, and communities to better understand how volunteer tourism can contribute to sustainable livelihoods of the people and places where the projects are done. Over the course of this research, I have navigated the complexities of how to explain a volunteer projects' purpose, the livelihoods of the host community, the collaborative partnership involved, and volunteer tourists' role in the community. The process became a conceptual and methodological dance of themes, approaches, and how best to represent it completely and in a way that brings meaning to how each component fits together.

I began this research using the sustainable livelihoods framework that I modified for volunteer tourism, presented in Figure 5.1 below. This is not the framework that I have presented several times already. The framework below was the framework that I used as a lens when conducting the research and initial stages of data analysis. I found that it was a helpful guide when conducting the research; however I ultimately restructured the framework when analyzing the data. The application of the framework in practice is not linear but a system. Although this format of the framework is not meant to be linear, it is presented as a linear, step-by-step process. I returned to the original sustainable livelihoods framework presented by Scoones (1998) and reviewed other variations modified specifically for tourism (Bennet et al., 2012; Simpson, 2009; Tao & Wall, 2007) for ideas. In order to create a more holistic understanding of the collaborative partnership, the livelihoods of the community of Achiote, ecotourism development, and volunteer tourism, it was necessary to reconceptualize the framework as a system of overlapping themes and issues.
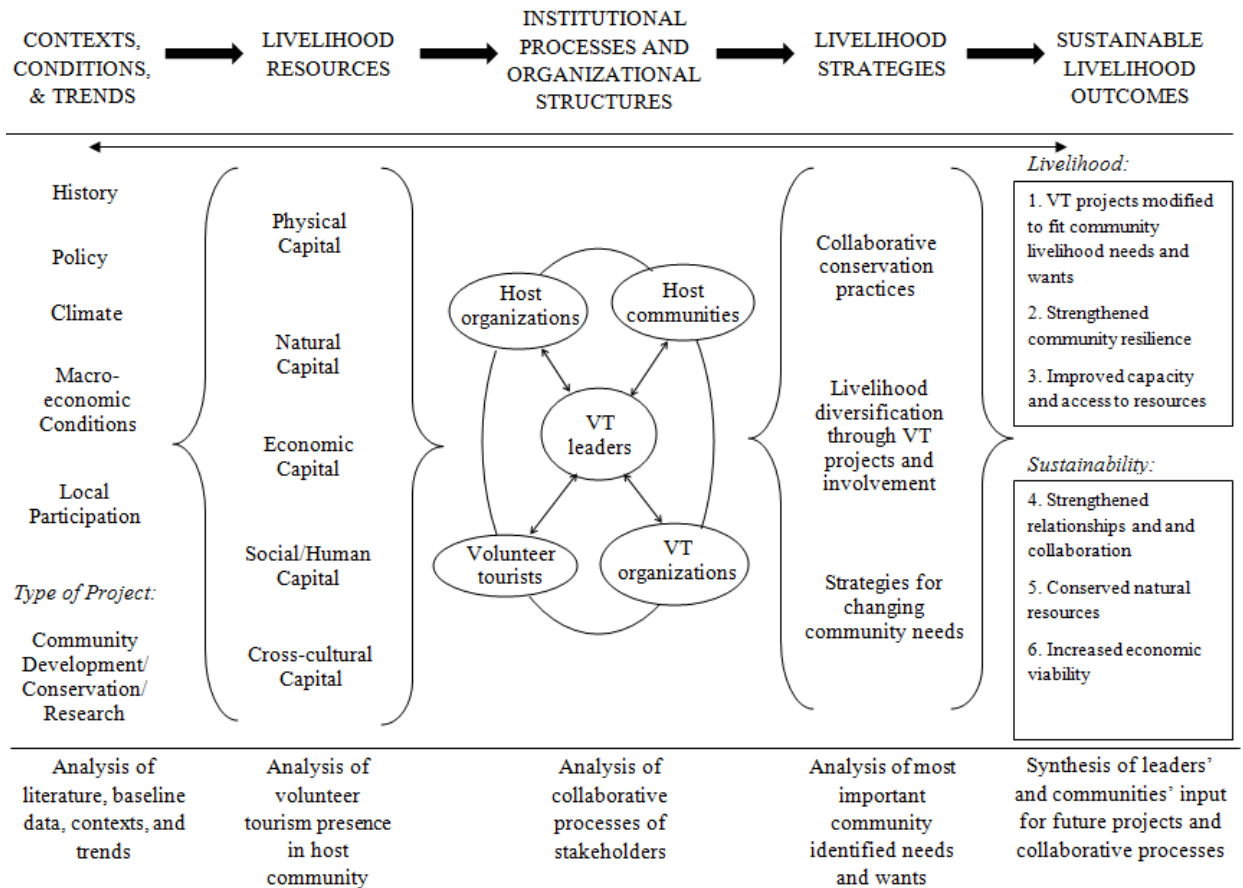
Figure 5.1. Sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism used in research process.

Although many other sustainable livelihoods researchers insist that taking a sustainable livelihoods approach is not linear, I found this assertion to be understated, particularly when only presented with Scoones' sustainable livelihoods framework without reading his notations. An ocular analysis of the framework presents a step-by-step formula followed from beginning to end, and subsequently the data is presented in a linear fashion as well. I found that although I wanted to include a more cyclical representation of the sustainable livelihoods framework such as Shen and colleagues' (2008) Sustainable Livelihood Framework for Tourism as presented in Chapter II, it did not address themes as holistically as in Scoones' (1998) framework.

In order to address these concerns and needs of a sustainable livelihoods framework that holistically addresses and includes analysis of issues at varying levels of scale, the type of

volunteer project conducted, and volunteer tourism activities, I contacted and worked with a professional graphic recorder who is familiar with this area of study to help design a sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism. The framework displayed in Figure 5.2 is more appropriate for the analysis of a particular volunteer project, such as ecotourism development, while still including an analysis of the processes of the volunteer projects in the community taken together with a focus on the livelihoods of the host community. Below are the criteria that we worked with in order to address and include the assets and challenges of previous sustainable livelihoods frameworks presented in the literature:

- Holistically addresses issues at varying levels of scale, the type of volunteer project conducted, and volunteer tourism activities

- Cyclical and systematic in nature, i.e. not linear

- Easily followed and adaptable to other academics and practitioners in volunteer tourism

- Represents the institutional processes and organizational structures as the core of the framework, including influences at the larger scale but particularly the stakeholders involved in volunteer tourism

- Replace Scoones' verbiage of final stage of "Sustainable Livelihood Outcomes" that may indicate an end with "Impacts and Influences" that more easily feed back into the rest of the framework

- Adapt framework with similar and recognizable shapes and themes as previous frameworks, such as Livelihood Resources represented as a hexagon
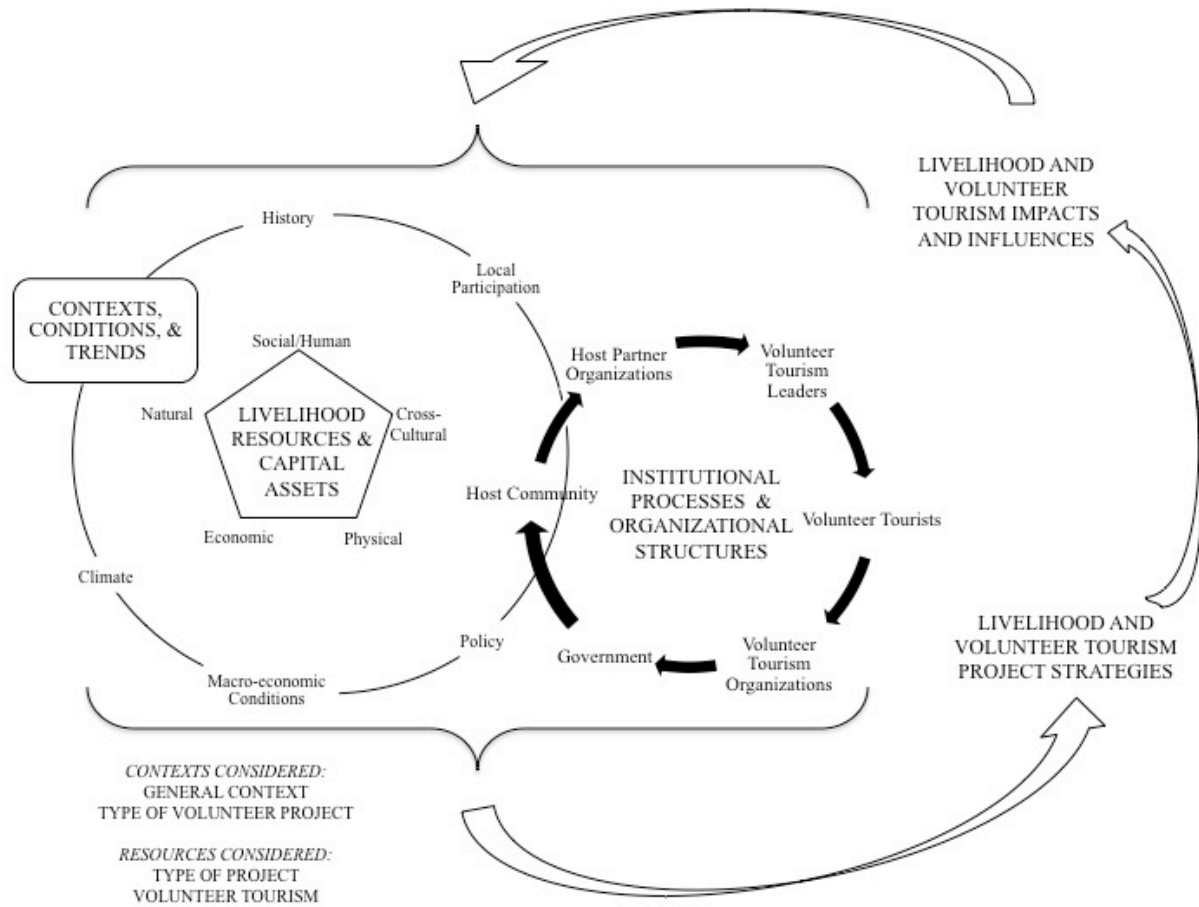
Figure 5.2. Sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism (concept mapping by Mullen & Eddins, 2013).

In my first sections of Chapter IV, it was necessary to present the contexts, conditions, and trends portion of the analysis together with the institutional processes and organizational structures. In this study, the institutional processes and organizational structures are inherently embedded in the context of the history, policy and politics, and macro-economic conditions. The international legacy of global powers like the US has a persistent influence on the way the country functions today. This, in part, has contributed to policy focused on capitalist framed infrastructure development and resulting inequalities in wealth distribution throughout the country. At the community level, the legacy of community development initiatives implemented

by CEASPA has a persistent influence in the way the community functions today. This, in part, has contributed to inequality in the region, punctuated by surrounding communities' expressed desire to experience the benefits of ecotourism infrastructure and free labor provided by the student volunteers.

Institutional Processes and Organizational Structures

Consistent with Scoones' (1998) suggestions, I found it imperative to set the context for the institutional processes and organizational structures with an analysis of specific influences in the community, specifically focusing on the nature and history of the partnership involved in operationalizing volunteer tourism. In a discussion of the role of institutions in rural sustainable livelihoods, Scoones cited Davies (1997):

> Institutions are the social cement which link stakeholders to access to capital of different kinds to the means of exercising power and so define the gateways through which they pass on the route to positive or negative [livelihood] adaptation (p. 24).

Analysis of institutional processes and organizational structures, including the partnership involved in volunteer tourism, brings forth the barriers and opportunities to sustainable livelihoods. This analysis also elicited the background and nature of the partnership, key perspectives and visions of stakeholders, and helped identify barriers and opportunities posed by people and organizations that may not be directly involved in the partnership for volunteer tourism, but influence policy and legislation. For example, when I began this study, I was unaware of the structural barrier the Panamanian government's processes has caused the region in development and the advancement of Los Rapaces as a legally recognized ecotourism group.

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Bennett and colleagues (2012) asserted that the presence of supportive policies and legislation are important components when analyzing tourism in the context of sustainable livelihoods. "Supportive policies and legislation include those that recognize ownership and/or access for tourism purposes, that support local economic development, that ensure tourism is managed in a sustainable manner, and that articulates culturally appropriate codes of conduct" (Bennet et al., 2012, p. 758). The presence of supportive tourism policies that specifically address these types of factors will become increasingly important when the bridge is complete. Currently, there are few, if any, regulations and policies that specifically address sustainable tourism development in Costa Abajo.

Additionally, the responses I received regarding the willingness of government entities to actively engage local people in the process of development may be indicative of the type of tourism plan implemented in Achiote, furthering structural inequalities. Or, on the contrary, the formation of Los Rapaces as a legally recognized group may provide the group with power in decision making processes for tourism development in the region. Perhaps both will happen. What is known at this point is that structural and physical barriers prohibit entry to the ecotourism industry. In contrast to this, an ecotourism group is eager to receive, promote, and develop ecotourism in Achiote.

The analysis of institutions and organizations is also important in a development context to identify the nature of involvement of organizations regarding power relations. Although each partner involved in the collaborative relationship is described here as more or less of equal rank, inherent complexities pervade each partnership, particularly considering relations between the North and the South, the rich and the poor. Some research in volunteer tourism treats stakeholders as isolated entities that interact, usually portrayed in the form of a case study, while

largely neglecting the characteristics about that interaction beyond cross-cultural aspects and the collaborative processes involved in operationalizing volunteer tourism (Raymond & Hall, 2008). In addition, is it said that partnerships involving collaboration for development between the North and South inherently result in a donor-recipient relationship (Elbers & Schulpen, 2011).

Although CEASPA, Los Rapaces, and the university have been working together for a number of years, a donor-recipient relationship resulting from consistent support and presence of volunteer tourists in Achiote exists. Although CEASPA considers the group to be an autonomous entity, Los Rapaces is dependent on CEASPA and the university student volunteers to continue and grow. They depend on CEASPA for training, guidance, and communication with other tourists and the university. They depend on the student volunteers for physical labor and construction of ecotourism services and to help develop ecotourism activities that they could provide other tourists. The history of involvement of CEASPA in Achiote was directly related to issues of local participation and the way in which the community was approached in terms of development and the way it functions today.

In a study on volunteer tourism in Cambodia, Sin (2010) found that without knowledge of or communication with sending organizations, projects are not known or recognized. Sin (2010) reported that during the research process in Cambodia, "all of the respondents would ask at some point – would you happen to know someone or some group that can come to build the kindergarten extension/fix the leaking roof/teach English and so on?" (p. 989). Sin's study highlights dependency and structural inequalities as major aspects of the host/guest relationship in volunteer tourism. I found this to be the case in my relations with the local government representative. He repeatedly inquired about donations and leaving behind my camera and my voice recorder. I reminded him each time that I was in Achiote because I received funds from a

grant, not because I paid for everything myself. However, it was still apparent that my clothes, camera, and my ability to access grant funds to travel to Panama sent a message of my global socio-economic position, even though in the US my income is considered under the poverty line with my graduate student stipend.

Context, Conditions, and Trends

For this study, I found it was equally important to include the nature and purpose of the particular volunteer project alongside the greater context, conditions, and trends. In Achiote the purpose of the projects is ecotourism development. I intentionally left the framework open regarding the nature of the volunteer project because not all volunteer tourism projects are initiated for the purpose of ecotourism development. The reasoning is so volunteer tourism researchers and practitioners can apply the framework to different types of volunteer projects, such as sea turtle conservation in Costa Rica, building a community center in Ghana, working with children recovered from prostitution in Thailand, or elephant monitoring in Tanzania. The framework could be adopted by those wanting to better understand volunteer tourism, particularly regarding their projects' implications for sustainable livelihoods in the communities where they take place.

An additional purpose of the sustainable livelihoods framework was to provide background at different levels of scale. I presented international, national, and community-level influences to gain a more holistic perspective. For example, the story of Florencia and her situation exhibits the traditional and changing livelihoods of people in Achiote, but it was equally important to discuss the construction on the Canal at the national and international level to understand the socio-economic and ecological implications of the vehicular bridge on Achiote.

Pearce and Coghlan (2008) explored the dynamics of investigating alternative tourism, and specifically volunteer tourism, at different levels of scale. They argue that there are four distinct levels of analysis appropriate for exploring volunteer tourism at varying layers of analysis. This study embraces all four layers of analysis and attempts to weave each together to represent a cohesive representation of scale and story. The first level of analysis is historical and anthropologically based. It focuses on the broader development of civilizations, considerations surrounding cultural diversity, and, in the case of volunteer tourism, questions why volunteer tourists more generally hark from European backgrounds and societies. "Viewed this way, volunteer tourists can be seen as a sociocultural group or movement representing an ethical body of people correcting or at least ameliorating the historical exploitation and environmental mistakes on which their society has been built" (Pearce & Coghlan, 2008, p. 132).

Understanding the macro-economic conditions of large-scale infrastructure development and a growing tourism industry was important to situate Achiote's context. Initial interest in development in Panama was guided by geopolitics and their centrally located narrow isthmus well suited for transport of goods and labor. Costa Abajo's historically limited access to the rest of the country due to the drawbridge over the Panama Canal has caused lack of consistent development and attention from the national government. Additionally, an understanding of the broader context of tourism development in Panama is significant to this study for several reasons: a) the identification of Panama as a top travel destination by globally distributed media sources, b) the political structure of tourism incentives that focus on mass tourism development by the Panamanian government and the private tourism sector, and c) the impacts of mass tourism development on other cultures and ecosystems in Panama. All of these dynamics imply change in livelihood structure in Achiote in the coming years.

The second level of analysis is macro-sociological. At the macro-sociological level there are structural components including international funding from organizations like the World Bank and USAID that influenced their decision to become involved in the region in the first place with the MesoAmerican Biological Corridor and the changing of hands of the Canal to Panamanians. Regarding the third level of analysis, the micro-sociological level, Pearce and Coghlan (2008) argue that the causation roots are most apparent in alternative and volunteer tourism. At the micro-sociological level, volunteer tourists' are viewed at the individual level, specifically in their ability to internalize, create, and construct their experiences and relationships. "The active, embodied, and aware tourists we are now conceptualizing are making their choices and creating and maintaining the identities from within predominantly postmodern Western societies" (Pearce & Coghlan, 2008, p. 135). This conceptualization of tourists can be similarly found in Mowforth and Munt's (2008) description of the ego-tourist. They conceptualize the ego-tourist along with Bourdieu's (1984) idea of the *new petit bourgeoisie*. Ego-tourists rely on their newly accumulated cultural capital to define themselves and further their own economic status. Ego-tourism is a product of postmodernism and the desperate search for individuality and distinction (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). A student leader's decision to continue her search for different people and places is indicative of this concept:

> I'm actually moving to Costa Rica for the summer for part of it, because I was
> like I love this place [Achiote]. I love living in another culture and it was just such
> a big deal for me that I had to go somewhere else and so I'm staying with a host
> family in San Jose and trying to the same-ish thing again where I get to hang out
> with as many locals as I can (Lacey).

Pearce and Coghlan identified the psychological and social psychological level as the fourth level of analysis. They specifically note this level for its predictive potential through attempting to identify models or systems of understanding volunteer tourism. This is witnessed in the social division that was created within the group when the restaurant in Escobal was being constructed. The group came to a boiling point, as a faculty leader noted, when some of the group felt the others had not done enough work when the group failed to complete the project they started. This is also highlighted in Los Rapaces' worries about what the volunteers think of them if they are unable to keep up with the maintenance of the projects or that the restaurant in Escobal is still not finished. The perceptions of one another are important to understanding how the collaborative process of operationalizing volunteer tourism functions.

I attempted to weave each level of analysis together while representing multiple perspectives beyond the volunteer tourists themselves. In sum, examination of multiple levels of analysis was important to understand the entire functioning of volunteer tourism, even if the host community is remotely located. It is important to clarify that Achiote, and in fact all communities, are not static entities. The reality is quite the opposite. Rural communities' livelihood resources are continually changing and have changed significantly in Achiote in recent years. An analysis of livelihood resources and associated capacities is necessary to determine the existing assets in the community. Understanding livelihood resources, assets, and capacity helps understand where volunteer tourism projects should be integrated into the system of the community.

Livelihood Resources and Capacities

Analysis of ecotourism and volunteer tourism's contribution to livelihoods can aid in decision making for what is developed and how, while reflecting the livelihood needs and wants of community residents. The livelihoods approach considers the diversity of assets, activities, and strategies that comprise rural communities with a focus on transcending economic benefits (Ashley, 2000). This is particularly the case in ecotourism in Achiote in that all of the volunteer projects contribute to capacity development for ecotourism and not income earning activities for Los Rapaces, excluding the cabana built in 2012. They are also not well utilized by tourists that come to Achiote. However, the infrastructure built in cooperation with the volunteer tourists provides Los Rapaces with a repertoire of services to offer tourists. The volunteers are also utilized as a trial for the ecotourism activities Los Rapaces offers in coordination with small scale tourism operators in other communities. Currently ecotourism development is nascent in Achiote and contributes to only a few people's livelihoods at this point. However, a focus on livelihoods in assessment of ecotourism has been identified as a way to contribute to livelihood benefits.

Returning to the sustainable livelihoods framework for volunteer tourism, similar reasoning was involved in the inclusion of the purpose of the volunteer project as well as the act of hosting volunteer tourists in the analysis of livelihood resources and capacities as in the context, conditions, and trends. Because volunteer tourists are still tourists, an assessment of capacity to host volunteer tourists and their associated activities and logistical considerations is needed. The story of when I went with Ricardo and the other two men to San Lorenzo to hand cut the lumber for the cabana is an example of why this type of assessment is necessary. Previous to this study, university leaders and Alternative Breaks staff were unaware of the lengths to

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which Los Rapaces goes to host the student volunteers for one week. The purpose of this section is to highlight the key assets and challenges of ecotourism as a livelihood strategy in Achiote, the value and impacts of volunteer tourism to contribute to livelihoods in Achiote, and the assets and challenges of the partnership. More specifically, analysis of physical, natural, economic, social/human, and cross-cultural capitals are analyzed below.

Achiote is a town with strong social structures in place. The partnership with CEASPA and the university is long standing. The social ties within the community are strong and interconnected. In fact, upon my arrival in Achiote, I was told that it is mandatory to say hello to everyone as we walked or biked down the street. They know and rely on each other. They have established community groups in the coffee cooperative and ecotourism group. As Ashley (2000) notes, "rural households need effectively functioning community institutions to manage and mediate relations between households, and the land, natural resources, social networks and informal markets on which they all depend…and to represent the community's interest to others" (p. 17). They have the interest and involvement of a major Panamanian NGO. They are connected with the land. They also have experience with livelihood change in the past. A woman in Los Rapaces reflected on the road being paved and the arrival of tourists and more people to the area.

> Before they passed through and didn't acknowledge anything. No one came here
> because there wasn't a highway to get here. And with the highway lots of people
> pass through, like this lots of people pass now, acknowledge us so [it will be] a
> good future. They all learn about us as well, the people will come to the
> community (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 26).

Challenges and Impacts of Volunteer Tourism on Livelihoods: Building Capacity?

The value of the projects that the volunteers have constructed over the years is a point of dissent between CEASPA, the university leaders, and Los Rapaces. From the perspective of some at CEASPA and the student and faculty leaders, the long-term worth of the projects was evaluated in terms of frequency of use, the ability to provide economic entry and income, and capacity building and empowerment. Several previous leaders of the projects mentioned that they do not believe that the projects are frequently utilized by tourists, or anyone for that matter. CEASPA held a similar sentiment,

as I understand most of the projects are severely underutilized (Amelia).

Additionally, tourists do not pay a fee to hike up to one of the bird watching platforms. The restaurant is the primary income earning operation for the group. However, Los Rapaces is extremely proud of the projects, although the projects do not provide income for them. A CEASPA employee described it this way:

Well, I mean the volunteers have done fantastic things. People feel all warm and friendly but what difference have the university volunteers made? The infrastructure is there, and the people love it and feel very proud of it, and they will show you, they like it and all of that. But you have to look at it and say, okay, who is using it? And who are the potential users and who could use it more? Who's coming? Because the idea isn't just build it and they will come (Amelia).

Currently the primary tourists in Achiote are bird watching tourists accompanied by tour operators from Panama City. The trails to the bird watching platforms are steep and many older birders are unable to climb up to them. They are also not clearly marked. In an interview with an

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ecotourism operator that has taken groups to Achiote for almost ten years, he told me he did not

know those services existed in the town. The Casa Museo is locked all of the time. In order to

access it, prior arrangements need to be made with Los Rapaces or CEASPA. This often proves

difficult given the lack of internet services and sporadic cellular service in the area. A faculty

leader described the ecotourism infrastructure in Achiote.

> I think there's a lot of potential there. Some of the stuff is so, not to be mean, but
>
> it's so amateurish that I don't really understand. You know, like the museum, it's
>
> cool that they have that but obviously I understand that they're really just starting
>
> off. So what are some of the things that might keep people here and that might
>
> create opportunities? (Robert).

The cabana built in 2012 by the volunteers and Los Rapaces is the first accommodation

in Costa Abajo tailored to small groups and families. The cabana is located on the main road

close to the restaurant. It has two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a communal area. The cabana's

view out the back window is lush tropical forest. The Ruta de Café is nearby, a trail built by the

volunteers some years ago meant to teach about the process of growing and making coffee. I

have not been able to see the cabana since its completion, as the students were unable to finish it

when I was there. However, Los Rapaces completed construction within weeks of the students'

departure. The idea was to have a place other than the Centro Tucán for tourists to be able to stay

in Achiote and have more privacy. The cabana is the first project that the student volunteers

constructed that brings income to Los Rapaces. The other projects – the bird watching platforms,

the trails, and the Casa Museo – are not income earning opportunities for Los Rapaces. A

CEASPA employee mentioned the capacity of Los Rapaces to better harness the opportunities

the projects provide.

But the problem is how long they [the university volunteer groups] are staying
and how long they should stay. How can they [Los Rapaces and community of
Achiote] take advantage of the projects they do? (Fernando).

The issue of infrastructure linked directly to economic advantages and disadvantages
associated with tourism development and development in general. Los Rapaces, on the other
hand, has high aspirations for the introduction of the cabin as a place to stay in Achiote.

If a group arrives at the Centro [Tucán], there is no ambiance and not much
privacy and it's uncomfortable, or if there is a couple or another person that wants
something more than what we have, and to prepare things and organize things for
the people…Easygoing, something easygoing and straightforward, something that
the tourists like….They can enjoy these things. It's very good but we don't have
an equivalent of. They want to be good with the environment, relax, they want to
sleep in a large bed with space with a very large television, air conditioning
(Ricardo, Ap. II, no. 25).

Los Rapaces knows what they have and what they don't have. They are aware they are
small scale and there are many tourists that want more in a destination, particularly in
accommodations. The village is growing and changing and they recognize there are opportunities
for them in tourism in the future. They also realize that they have much to offer tourists as a
caring community with rich natural resources and culture. Although the activities that comprise
the livelihoods of people in Achiote are primarily agriculturally based or employment in
association with the Canal or otherwise in Colon, livelihood change is an overwhelming theme in
Achiote.

People will come to the community. As I am writing this dissertation, construction of the vehicular bridge is underway, eliminating the temporal and physical barrier to the region of Costa Abajo and Achiote. Although the bridge will allow Achiote residents easier access to transportation and resources currently unavailable or difficult to access, Colon, its associated issues, and tourists will also be able to access Achiote and Costa Abajo. Their lack of access to internet and reliable communication technology inhibits their ability to effectively market to and access tourists. The tourists that do arrive in Achiote are primarily birding tourists accompanied by bilingual tour operators from Panama City and divert economic opportunities associated with community ecotourism. Infrastructure for ecotourism is in the early stages of development and is largely based on the volunteer projects completed by the university student volunteers.

Geographic location is also a barrier because although Achiote and their surrounding communities are in the buffer zone of San Lorenzo National Park, they are not gateway communities. Tourists must pass the park and Achiote Road to arrive in Achiote. Tourists must also pass through Colon to cross the drawbridge over the Canal as well, and tourists are urged not to visit Colon because of their reputation for violence and drug trafficking. The development priorities of the national government are massive infrastructure development, copper mines, and hydroelectric projects, and less so on the social and environmental impacts of these on rural communities like Achiote.

In this section, the livelihood capacities of the community were analyzed for ecotourism and volunteer tourism in Achiote. This part of the framework provided context for community livelihoods, ecotourism in Achiote, and the impacts of volunteer tourism in Achiote. Combining the capacity of ecotourism and volunteer tourism is appropriate due to the community's relative inexperience with ecotourism development. The physical and human resources necessary to host

a volunteer group for only one week highlights the connection of the two and level of capacity at which Los Rapaces operates at the point of this study. Although I did not explicitly refer to each capital independently, each theme was represented in the story, as outlined in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1. *Examples of capital assets and barriers to ecotourism in Achiote*

	Assets	Barriers
Physical Capital	➢ Projects built by volunteers ➢ Centro Tucan	➢ Infrastructure is small scale and not suitable for more up-scale tourists
Natural Capital	➢ Rich biodiversity ➢ Located in buffer zone of San Lorenzo National Park	➢ Large-scale infrastructure development threatens natural processes and deforestation
Economic Capital	➢ Growing community ➢ Wealthiest community in Costa Abajo	➢ Still very poor ➢ Limited access to resources
Social/Human Capital	➢ Strong social structures in partnership with CEASPA and university ➢ Los Rapaces is trained and motivated	➢ Limited capacity to accommodate tourists and volunteer tourists
Cross-Cultural Capital	➢ Experience hosting volunteers ➢ Experience testing their ecotourism activities on the volunteers	➢ Do not speak English ➢ May have lower standards for other tourists because volunteer tourists are not demanding

If I had previously known about the potential impacts of the bridge, I would have added a third research question based on planning for the future and further analysis of capital assets and barriers to ecotourism development, vulnerability, and resilience. This analysis is part of my future research plan as it is beyond the scope of this study, but it is similarly important to note that had this sustainable livelihoods approach to study volunteer tourism not been conducted, a comprehensive understanding of the visions and strengths of Los Rapaces and the people of Achiote may not have been brought forth for further monitoring and assessment.

Further, an assessment of the volunteer project purpose is necessary for several reasons. First, the entire purpose of a sustainable livelihoods assessment for volunteer tourism is to better understand and explain how the projects actually aid in livelihood sustainability of people in the community. A sustainable livelihoods approach in volunteer tourism helps determine the appropriateness of the kinds of projects initiated and ultimately how to tailor volunteer tourism projects to best suit the livelihood needs and wants of the community. Therefore, I continue in my quest to explain and understand volunteer tourism using a sustainable livelihoods framework with an analysis of livelihood strategies in the context of vulnerability and resilience.

Livelihood Strategies and the Future of Achiote

Strategies and recommendations about the potential of a sustainable livelihoods approach to assess volunteer tourism can only be made when there is a clear understanding of the first three layers of the framework. The impact that volunteer tourism can have in one week per year in the face of mass-scale infrastructure development is miniscule, but the legacy of the partnership, the collaboration involved, and the ideas of community development and support are well established.

Achiote has experience with change and coping with stresses and shocks, such as the introduction of the paved road in the 1990s and the community development work implemented by CEASPA. One person who was involved in the initial projects for community development in Achiote noted that Achiote's experience with the student volunteers and CEASPA is beneficial when the shocks and stresses do settle in.

If Achiote plays its cards right, since unlike any of its neighboring communities, it

has now benefitted from 15 years of workshops, courses, of technical assistance,

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of small grants and all. And because it is closer to Panama City than a lot of these other places down the coast, it will be a gateway for the coastline. So if they play their cards right, they are ideally suited to moving ahead the experience that came from the volunteer program. It's sort of good because it's sort of like a trial run (Henry).

He continued saying that although undergraduate volunteer tourists are not nearly as demanding as five-star tourists paying three hundred dollars a night per room, that's how it usually happens in ecotourism. The backpackers and the scientists assume the role of the early innovators. Although Achiote is better equipped than the surrounding communities that have no experience with tourism whatsoever, they may have lower expectations of tourist demands. He said they cannot just sit on their laurels, but have to adapt to different kinds of tourists. He said of the student volunteers,

they're not going to ask for a refund just because they got Montezuma's revenge or because they had cockroaches in their room (Henry),

reifying that many tourists have higher expectations than community center bunk accommodations and one restaurant with one menu option offered per meal.

Fortunately, the integration of ecotourism into a community's existing livelihoods has been found to be easier than other types of employment that may require migration to larger towns (Ashley, 2000). Ecotourism can complement existing activities. People can continue to be farmers if they are farmers, live in town with their families, and it provides incentive to conserve their natural resources. The fact that the concept of ecotourism was introduced to Achiote by a suggestion by a major international development agency, USAID, and then implemented by a

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major Panamanian agency, CEASPA, poses problematic in its inception and as the development strategy that serves as the basis for this study.

Throughout the majority of this study, I discussed ecotourism development in Achiote as a given, and perhaps a necessity for the continuation of Los Rapaces as a particular livelihood strategy. However, Los Rapaces and ecotourism exist as a very small, albeit influential, actor in the greater livelihood processes of the community. Although many criticisms of ecotourism exist, in this case it could be a more viable livelihood strategy than some other options. Further monitoring of sustainable livelihood strategies and planning in this area is necessary.

Additionally, I situate ecotourism development as a means to guard from the potential stresses and shocks of mass tourism development in the area when the bridge is completed. Rarely are studies of ecotourism development conducted in the very early stages of development, particularly when potential for mass tourism development is in the near future. Government policy clearly favors mass tourism development and can be witnessed in the next section where I compare accommodations and services offered between Costa Arriba and Costa Abajo. Government policy also clearly favors infrastructure development, transportation, and increased commerce. It is also clear that very little is being done by the government to prepare Achiote and Costa Abajo for the changes that the bridge will bring.

But change is coming. The bridge connecting time and space between Achiote and Colon is coming. A leader for the university volunteer groups states the problem well: "It's not a question of how to stop it from happening, but what safeguards do you put in place now that can be proactive to the best that you can, and not reactive" (Katie). What kinds of safeguards? How strong must they be? What needs to happen to brace this town in the face of potential social and

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environmental destruction? The social and environmental implications of the coming changes are great. Clear planning for the livelihood implications, particularly for strategies for sustainable livelihoods, has been given little regard. Hopefully, this study and the associated connections and conversations that were involved in the research process can bring attention to the key issues and impacts this bridge may have.

No one can predict what exactly will take place and the impacts on livelihoods in the area once the bridge is constructed. However, the kind of change is predictable given experience in other areas, government policy, and other factors. As Mandell (2003) stated in reference to unpredictable government policy and planning in Panama, "Left unchecked in the former Canal Zone, unharnessed capitalism would reek havoc on the rainforests and the nascent ecotourism industry that proponents hope will save them" (p. 31). It is important to understand the current impacts of infrastructure development in Achiote and throughout the country. The next section is meant as a warning if a clear plan for adapting to the shocks and stresses is not integrated into livelihood strategies.

What Could Be: Evidence of the Impact of Infrastructure Development in Panama

When I asked the local government representative what he thinks is going to happen when the bridge is completed, he told me he thinks there is going to be much more tourism and traffic. There is already quite a bit of evidence of the kinds of changes that are going to happen in Achiote. He told me about all the materials he is using to cut down the trees to make room for the construction and the new roads. The local government representative is extremely proud to be involved in such progress. He is the first government representative in the area to be afforded

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so much money for projects and development. He has a brand new Nissan truck courtesy of government funding.

He told me that he wanted to become the local government representative because,

I was born here and I didn't have resources, and with this position, we are sure to move forward in the town. Traditionally, it was difficult because we didn't have resources, so now we have some resources, but I am the middleman to the people (Oscar, Ap. II, no. 27).

He took me on a tour of all the projects under construction as a part of his time in the position. He described the Casa Hospital, which is not a hospital, but a community meeting place to celebrate birthdays, have parties, and gather together. There was another large building being constructed in the middle of town. He told me that the building was for people that don't have enough money to live. But to me, that's more like a poor house. He did not mention programs to help people start businesses or build a concrete house to replace their wooden plank walls. I was hoping that it would be a community center where the kids could go and play soccer and basketball and play pool. The kids need something to do, especially the teenagers. Right now, many teenagers ride their bikes up and down the street listening to music. There are few opportunities for extracurricular activities for teenagers in Achiote. They're too young to have a job in Colon, but old enough to get themselves in trouble if they felt so inclined. He means well and is extremely proud of his accomplishments, however I'm fairly certain most of his projects and ideas are not his own or of the community, but are of the national government.

I took the photos in Figure 5.3 when he was driving me around to show me all of the projects that are happening while he is in office. He urged me to send him the photos before a

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meeting with the national government in April so he could show them his progress. He specifically told me that he didn't want any of the photos of the landscape and the forest, but of the construction. The roads cut gashes in the dense tropical forest. I recognized almost every construction worker from around town.

Figure 5.3. Photographs of road construction near Achiote (Eddins, 2012)

The infrastructure development and changing landscape in Panama have resulted in deforestation, land use conversion, habitat loss, and wildlife displacement (Rompre, Robinson, & Desrochers, 2008). The environmental implications could prove catastrophic at all levels of scale. As the narrow isthmus connecting North America and South America, Panama is the highway for migrating species, particularly birds, through the Americas. Rompre and colleagues (2008) indicated urbanization and conversion of land for agricultural purposes as major impacts

on ecological processes and habitat loss as well. At the community level, ecological health is necessary to grow crops and to draw in tourists. In a study conducted just after the Panamanians gained control of the Canal, the lack of sewage systems and trash collection in rural forest communities close to the Canal cause heavy pollution and affect the water quality (Ibanez et al., 2002). Achiote does not have sewage systems or trash collection and polluted rivers and roadsides are part of everyday life. However, some ecotourism professionals and several people at CEASPA told me that Achiote residents need to understand that pollution is generally unacceptable by many tourists. In fact, pollution and unsanitary conditions could be perceived by tourists in contradiction to the idea of ecotourism if they expect pristine wilderness and natural areas.

At the national level, the Panama Canal is dependent on the ecological health of the Canal's watershed to function, using 52 million gallons per day to fill and empty the locks (Carse, 2012). The water used to operate the locks is largely from rainfall, the reason why over half of the Canal watershed is designated protected area. However, the infrastructure development is disrupting the natural processes in the watershed. As one of the ecotourism professionals noted,

> Because we're literally destroying the habitat, we're on the brink of destroying
> something like 40 to 60 percent of this country, in terms of hydroelectric dams
> and mines (David).

This has implications for the health and function of the Panama Canal watershed as well as biodiversity and species migration elsewhere. Environmental degradation and deforestation

could have global implications for climate change and the health of many other ecological systems.

Political conflicts resulting from massive infrastructure development have erupted all over the country, and not all of them are associated with the Canal's construction. Panama has particular interest in building hydroelectric dams and copper mines. The indigenous group, the Ngobe Bugle, rioted against the construction of copper mines in what Panama calls Comarcas, their indigenous territories. Several Ngobe were killed in the protest. Panamanians are proud of the Comarcas as they are signifiers of respect toward indigenous people and lands, and there was a national sentiment against government and police actions regarding the mines. This conflict erupted in February 2012 and was still fresh when I returned to Panama for my second trip the following month. After the conflicts, German researchers found a new snake species in the highlands of western Panama and named the species *Sibon noalamina* (Senckenberg Research Institute and Natural History Museum, 2012). The second name of the snake translates in Spanish to "no to the mine" to call attention to habitat loss caused by the mines. Panama is not only one of the most biodiverse countries in the world; it is one of the most important bodies of land for species passing through.

The manner in which tourism is developed in the area has major implications for the people of Achiote and their livelihoods. Perhaps the most telling of the possibilities for tourism infrastructure development is a visual juxtaposition of the levels of development between Costa Arriba and Costa Abajo. Traveling east from the city of Colon in the region of Costa Arriba, evidence of mass tourism development increasingly materializes. Ports for cruise ships, tour operators, and grand hotels litter the landscape. The Melia Panama Canal Hotel is indicative of the development and difference between Costa Arriba and Costa Abajo of Colon Province. The

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Melia Panama Canal Hotel is only eight minutes east of Colon, while Achiote is 15 minutes from Colon without a wait for the draw bridge in Costa Abajo. The series of photos highlights the differences in Table 5.2. This is not to say that this type of development is an absolute for the future of Costa Abajo, but rather to demonstrate the differences in the types of development in two places that are not far from each other spatially, but very far in terms of development and social ideals.

Each accommodation, El Centro el Tucán and Melia Panama Canal Hotel, clearly have different purposes and targeted clientele in the tourism industry. The purpose of the juxtaposition is to photographically demonstrate the level of development and style of accommodation offered in both places, and the type of tourism that could be developed in Costa Abajo when the traffic bridge is completed. Although ecotourism and sustainable tourism exist in Panama, it is not a cohesive industry and not a top priority for the Panamanian government's tourism plan.

Because policy favors mass tourism, the people of Achiote and their surrounding communities are vulnerable to land tenure issues and the possibility of selling their land to what may seem like an attractive offer by developers. For example, Florencia could get to the point that she could sell her land because there is no one to take care of it, she is aging, and needs the money. Although her land and her home is her heart and life's investment, similar stories are told all over the world when faced with economic hard times. In a study simulating land use change in rural communities located in the buffer zone of La Amistad Biosphere Reserve straddling Costa Rica and Panama, it was found that an increase of tourism could result in decreasing prices of their crops to unprofitable levels (Duffy, Corson, & Grant, 2001). They suggested that a management plan focus on social and economic issues rather than ecological to best influence land-use decisions of buffer zone farmers.

Table 5.2. *Photographic comparison between accommodations offered in Costa Abajo (Eddins, 2012) and Costa Arriba (Melia Panama Canal Hotel, 2012).*

El Centro el Tucán, Costa Abajo	Melia Panamá Canal Hotel, Costa Arriba
Accommodation Building Structures:	

| *Lounge Areas:* | |

| *Bedrooms:* | |

| *Dining and Meals at Accommodation:* | |

My interviews also suggested that the socio-cultural and economic factors influence land-use decisions in and around Achiote rather than ecological issues. While the idea of sustainable farming practices has been introduced and the idea of conservation is spreading, mainly due to the trainings and projects implemented by CEASPA, the socio-cultural tradition of agriculture and economic benefits resonate more deeply with people in the area. The ideas for the Casa Museo and Ruta Café are good examples of steps in the right direction for tourism in Achiote in that they align with the socio-cultural aspects of coffee growing. While these are steps in the right direction for the area, they remain very small scale. The implementation of mass tourism in the area has the potential for much greater social, economic, and ecological impacts in the region.

The purpose of this section was to describe vulnerability context for Achiote and Costa Abajo. It is not a given that these things will happen, but it is important to note what is happening elsewhere. They also help better understand the measures that should be taken for sustainable livelihood strategies. The next section details the responses I received regarding visions for the future. The responses range from strategies for ecotourism to recommendations for the volunteer projects to general hopes and visions for the future. There is a great divide between the ideas from the community and the ideas from the other partners. Many people in the community put great faith in the youth. They know that tourism, in one form or another, is going to be a great presence in their area. Many people also value their current lifestyle and environment. They know that their natural resources are the primary tourist attraction. However, CEASPA, the ecotourism professionals, and the leaders have slightly different ideas in approach. The next two sections detail each stakeholder's aspirations and recommendations for the future. I also discuss strengths and challenges associated with their visions for the future. These responses

coupled with the sustainable livelihoods assessment for volunteer tourism in Achiote presented

in this dissertation have brought me to develop a research plan for the future of ecotourism,

sustainable livelihoods strategies, and volunteer tourism in Achiote.

Visions for the Future: The Children are like Seeds

When discussing conservation in Achiote, many people referred to the potential of their

children's role in the conservation of the culture and environmental resources of the area.

CEASPA's bioliteracy program in the schools exposes the children to environmental issues

through experiential learning, immersion in nature, science experiments, and exposure to

professionals in environmental positions like park rangers and ecotourism officials. The hope is

that the program will make an impact on the future of conservation in Achiote and their career

decisions as adults. A woman in Achiote used the metaphor of a seed to connect conservation

and her thoughts on children's involvement in conservation issues:

> The children are like a seed…and like seeds, they are learning to conserve nature,
>
> the birds, and to protect the environment. The children explain [to their parents
>
> and others] not to throw trash on the ground and to conserve…They are growing
>
> mentally (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 28).

Awareness of conservation issues is growing in Achiote. CEASPA's involvement in the

coordination, training, and formation of the coffee cooperative, Los Rapaces, and the bioliteracy

program in the school has exposed many to the importance of and foundations of conservation

and capacity building.

> Additionally, there is much struggling and fighting. They [CEASPA and the
>
> bioliteracy program] are going to teach the importance of the environment. Not to

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throw garbage in the street, not to hurt the plants, not to treat animals poorly, and

to not hurt anyone. So good are these things, because the trees, the flowers are

precious. They need to give an example to them (Florencia, Ap. II, no. 29).

Another woman speaks of conservation in terms of the future:

We have to conserve the environment here, already God is conserving quite a bit.

Also, they have to conserve this well because this is what we have. The future is

in the hopes of the children…The children see what the adults do. The people

come in buses, throw trash on the ground, and in the home as well. They don't

take care, they cut down the trees, and they [the children] think, they don't care

for our nature. The parents determine what the children are going to do. If there

isn't anyone in the community that guides them, we are going to lose everything

(Maria, Ap. II, no. 30).

I knew from my conversations with the student leaders previous to my arrival that a

highlight for the volunteers as well was playing soccer in the street with the children. They had a

way of communicating across language barriers that resonates clearer than most adults, the

language of play and genuine interest in helping with the projects, or at least trying to figure out

why there was a group of white people in town doing work one week a year. This was my

experience as well. When I couldn't find Victoria for a tour of her land one afternoon, the little

boy with the bright green eyes and big ears led me up the hill to her. When I had an interview

with Lucas one afternoon at the Centro, Miguel sat two feet away listening to our conversation

about the history and potential of volunteer work in Achiote. When it started raining an hour

before my focus group was supposed to begin and we suspected bleak attendance, we sent Micela's son through the town to gather the attendees.

A success story of one of the young people trained in guiding by the projects associated with San Lorenzo is that of a young man who moved to Panama City, learned English, and now works as an ecotourism operator. His mother told me that he learned English by forcing himself to do so. He did not learn it in school. Florencia says Los Rapaces talks about capacity, about tourism, about how to attend to groups, but there are problems with speaking English. She says the young people can go on to university and study tourism and bring groups to the community. Right now, though, no one speaks English fluently in Achiote. This does not serve as a large problem right now because the university student volunteer group is only group that comes for more than one day per year, and she says that at least a few of the students speak a little bit of Spanish. However, the way some other people talk about ecotourism in Achiote connotes that Los Rapaces doesn't know what they're doing or understand tourists. Below are some of the recommendations for ecotourism and volunteer tourism in Achiote provided by the external partners that have experience in Achiote, but do not live there.

Recommendations from Others

The most common themes for recommendations about ecotourism in Achiote were regarding understanding the demands of different kinds of tourists, particularly cleanliness and timeliness. The director of CEASPA talked about their need for greater capacity for ecotourism.

> I understand that Los Rapaces and the people working in the restaurant need more
> capacity, reinforcement, and commitment to the proposed development of the area
> as an ecotourism area. And to have a clearer concept of quality service, because

the quality of service is causing complaint….because there's a filthy dog barking over here, cats and dogs over there. So it can be very folk in a sense, you have to have a space that's clean (Reina, Ap. II, no. 31).

She continued to say that they need better training in quality standards and hygiene for a level of service that is going to provide them with more income and grow. She also said that the environment needs better attention. She says these two things, infrastructure and the environment, have a connection to human rights. But she says here there is a problem with the concept about the environment that is not clear in the community, that at least they need to reinforce it a little better. To her, the concept of sustainable development implies that there is an intention that natural resources and nature are not only for extraction.

An ecotourism professional held a similar view. He said that when he began to visit Achiote in the 1990s, they didn't have anything,

the word is nothing (Rafael).

He discussed that he thinks they need more motivation to make them believe that it's worth it to protect what they have, he said that's the problem. He used a metaphor for long-term planning that people need to look beyond what they are going to eat today, but what they are going to eat today, tomorrow, and the next day. He said that they have to believe and there is a lot of room for improvement, particularly for the types of guests he hosts. A faculty leader echoed this sentiment but in regards to who may ultimately benefit from ecotourism in Achiote and who may not if Los Rapaces becomes successful in ecotourism and begin to make money.

I was interested in figuring out who gets to be in Los Rapaces versus who doesn't…I'm always interested in if the thing does start to build and grow, you

know, looking at who's in the group because in the end, these people are making money, people start spending money. How does that change community relations? I mean, like the restaurant in Escobal was interesting because this link to regional economic development. We were essentially building a private enterprise for one guy. And I didn't emphasize that too much with the students because they wanted to be doing something at least more noble than that, but that's the nature of doing development work is that basically you're going along capitalist frames or you're helping people make money. It's a business. We tend to like projects that are somehow communal in a group or community rather than an individual but in the end that community is made up of individuals. So I'll be interested to see how that pans out and who the winners and losers are (Robert).

There is opportunity for the volunteer tourists to have an impact when it comes to improving the quality of services and capacity for ecotourism in Achiote. Many other suggestions came up in the interviews and from my own observations such as clear and well-marked signs indicating the tourist attractions as well as interpretive signage along the trails. At this point, the only way people learn about the process of making coffee on the Ruta Café is if they are led by Los Rapaces. Also, there are no signs indicating the existence of the trails and bird watching platforms. Student volunteers could design and make signs. In addition, I believe the diversification of volunteer activities would not only contribute to livelihood diversification in Achiote, but other community members could experience benefits of the volunteer work, therefore encouraging them to contribute to the idea of ecotourism. As a student leader suggested,

I mean I think it would be my like, I wanna be a farmer vision, I just think it

would be really cool if we could go and help [the coffee farmer they visit], like do

some manual labor. It seemed like if we weren't working on the Casa Museo, we

were just kind of like frolicking, which is awesome, I mean yes, we paid to get to

Panama. Yes, it's like the balance of fun but I think that these students have

motivation and they want to help (Carly).

Additionally, in order to strengthen the partnership, understanding among stakeholders,

and increase bilateral benefits of the student volunteers and Achiote, several suggested greater

involvement in the pre-trip preparation and educational experience before the students arrive in

Achiote. The group begins to meet in October and they don't arrive until March. Although

groups have been coming for eight years and will continue to come, CEASPA still does not fully

know what they learn or prepare for before the come. They would like greater involvement in the

preparatory process, particularly to understand each other's roles, the impact and history of the

involvement in the area to help the students internalize their work and presence in Achiote. A

CEASPA representative noted,

People sign up for these things, oh that sounds fun, they get carried along the way

and there they are. If that is something that other people felt would increase the

value of the program without overdoing it (Amelia).

CEASPA would like to better understand the reflection processes the students do while they are

there to learn what they think of the town and how the experience changes their perspectives and

lives.

A faculty leader discussed the preparation for the students as well. It struck him that while some students may have had a prior conception of the US's involvement in Panama on their own volition, there were many basic concepts that the students weren't well informed of prior to the trip, for example how they are arriving in Panama on the footsteps of a long history of colonialism and US control and influence. It also struck him that the students didn't fully understand why a community would choose ecotourism as a development plan, along with the pros and cons of ecotourism. For him, one of the best things he has done as an educator was to be working with and getting to talk to the students about what is going on and be able to answer questions. A clearer understanding of purpose, goals, and visions for ecotourism, volunteer tourism, and the livelihood needs and wants of the community needs to be communicated among all stakeholders.

As demonstrated by the responses I received about the future, there is a clear misunderstanding in scope and vision. For example, a woman in Los Rapaces discussed the difference between the group in Escobal and Los Rapaces lies in the motivation and will of the people, she says. She called it the force to continue and move forward. She says that you have to endure and keep going and last out every day. Their faith in the children to become leaders in conservation and ecotourism highlights this vision as well. On the other hand, some of the ecotourism professionals and people in CEASPA do not think they have the motivation to become an ecotourism destination and conserve their natural resources. Is it a question of motivation or knowledge and capacity? As stated in Chapter IV, the training for Los Rapaces was quick and intense. They also lack resources and capacity to maintain the volunteer projects from previous years. In addition, because ecotourism remains a minor contribution to livelihoods

in the community as a whole, many neither experience the benefits of it nor understand what ecotourism means to ecotourists.

Despite all of the institutional, political, and physical structural barriers the community of Achiote face in terms of sustainable development, ecotourism, and livelihood strategies, the people of this small community and the partnership involved hold many assets and capabilities to create a sustainable future and achievement of a collective envisioned future. Although only a few people comprise Los Rapaces, there is no doubt they have the motivation to grow and learn and continue. As this study comes to a close, it is important to close this discussion with perhaps the most indicative statement of the drive to continue and the will of the people. As the president of the group stated,

> We will always continue working, we will never fall. We are working and
> continue hope…always linking new things so that tourists come and see what we
> have…this is the goal every year, to treat and attend to others and the tourists
> come (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 32).

Study Limitations

As a researcher conducting cross-cultural qualitative research in a rural community, I encountered many limitations to my ability to do this study in the way that I initially desired as well as limitations to the study itself. The first major limitation I encountered during the research process was the denial of my participation with the Alternative Break group on their project. I understand why they did not want me to participate, as outlined in Chapter III, however Los Rapaces and CEASPA sincerely wanted my inclusion on the project to obtain a holistic interpretation of the processes when the student volunteers are in Achiote. Although this did not

affect the ability to complete the research, I felt that it did limit my ability to assess and discover what actually happens when the Panamanian partners host the groups. Also, Los Rapaces and CEASPA have a legacy of inclusion and hold a more communal orientation, and the fact that I could not participate confused them to a degree.

My first interviews were difficult for several reasons, but the primary limitation here is my ability to communicate in Spanish. Although now I have been told that I speak Spanish with a Panamanian accent, I could barely communicate complete thoughts when I arrived. For example, our first community interview in Achiote was with Lucas, our primary contact and key informant in Achiote. After the interview, my research assistant and I were reflecting on the degree to which our inability to communicate affects our interviews. Lucas was trying to describe a waterfall and at first he said a word neither of us understood, then he said *cascada* and we still didn't get it, then he said "*agua?*" Only then were we finally able to piece together what he was explaining. I am sure they appreciated that we were trying, but language barriers and associated barriers to communicate effectively were a limiting factor to the depth and breadth of understanding and topics covered during the interviews.

I struggled every minute of the analysis about how to best represent each perspective and voice. I could not do everything that I wanted to do. The way that each stakeholder described their involvement in Achiote is telling of their respective backgrounds and goals. In my interview with the director of CEASPA, it was clear that she was accustomed to discussing development and poverty in a broader context. She frequently incorporated buzz words like sustainable development, capacity, and poverty into her responses. I found it difficult to get her to talk about specifics. In contrast to this, I found it difficult to get some people in Achiote to discuss broader context, particularly regarding hypothetical situations. I posed a hypothetical to a

member of Los Rapaces of giving advice to another ecotourism group that is just starting out from what he had learned over the years. He kept thinking that I was referring to the ecotourism group in Escobal and I resolved to specific situations to bring meaning to their experiences. This could have been an effect of my limited ability to conjugate the verb tense in Spanish that translates to hypothetical situations. However, another example of this arose when I asked an Achiote resident what his favorite animal is. He said that his horse is his favorite animal. Several of the student leaders discussed their personal transformation as a result of their experience in Achiote. They regard their work in the town as transformative for Los Rapaces and the community of Achiote.

Additionally, the presence of my research assistant in the first trip in June and July 2011 helped me learn quickly and make sense of things we didn't quite understand. If I didn't fully understand something, she could help me fill in the gaps, and vice versa. We could discuss next steps, changes to the research plan, and reflect together about previous interviews and experiences. However, upon my return in March 2012, I was the sole English speaker in Achiote. Therefore if I missed something or didn't understand particular words or phrases, then I missed them. I became more adept to asking people to clarify or restate using different words, but I still do not consider myself fluent.

The research process progressed much slower than I originally planned. Scheduling set times for interviews was nearly impossible, as the closest response to an actual time was "in the morning" or "in the afternoon." Several times our prospective interviewees did not show up. One time, my assistant and I biked all the way out to the farm of the man who operates the coffee cooperative. He told us to come on Saturday. He wasn't home and his phone went straight to voicemail. On our way home from the coffee farm, dodging trucks and speeding cars on our

rickety bicycles, we encountered another limitation to our productivity in Achiote. We started to

know everyone. It was a welcome feeling as people began to accept our presence and the reasons

for it, but it also made getting work done more difficult when we couldn't bike down half a block

without getting invited to a pig roast.

The navigation of conducting research and integrating myself into the daily processes of

the community became an issue of personal contention. A major goal for this study was to

describe the livelihoods of the people there and a pig roast presents an appropriate opportunity to

experience how people celebrate. However, at the same time I had a research agenda with

funding sources, a doctoral committee, and a dissertation counting on my findings during my

time there. I found that many of my favorite conversations were when the voice recorder was

absent. For example, I went to the house that makes cheese to milk the cows in the morning and

see how the cheese is made from beginning to end. The cheese made from the cows that morning

was ready to eat later that afternoon. During the time the milk was turning into cheese, my

assistant and I had a three hour conversation without the recorder about how Achiote functions

as a town, their connection to the land and their cattle, and the value they put on remaining a

small cheese making operation despite offers to vend in Colon. They are incredibly proud that

they raise their cows naturally, without hormones or antibiotics, and are not naïve to how dairy

cows are treated in other places. They explained the health benefits of natural food and their

reasoning for raising their cows naturally. In my field notes, I wrote:

> We didn't have the freaking recorder on but it was definitely one of the most in-
>
> depth, informational meetings we've had, not to mention made probably one of
>
> our closest friends here, during these few hours and looking back I'm actually
>
> pretty glad the tape recorder wasn't on because I think it would've affected the

authenticity and essence of the conversation and relationship (Field Note, July 1, 2011).

Another example of a conversation without the recorder was a walking tour of a woman's land. We stopped at the top of her hill with an entire view of the town and surrounding landscape to peel a piece of fruit. She proceeded to express the most beautiful words about her connection to her God, her land, her heart, her family, and her community. The breeze gusted as she completed her statement, punctuating the depth and interconnectivity of her insight. Even if I had recorded this conversation, the translation would not do justice to the meaning behind her words. These kinds of conversations were well documented in my field notes, and I remember them well. However, while in the field I remember wanting to have a secret recorder in my head so I could use them directly in my study.

Another limiting factor in this study was my short time in the field. I was in Panama for only nine weeks total and sometimes feel like I only scraped the surface of the amount of complexity and depth for a full interpretation of sustainable livelihoods, volunteer tourism, and ecotourism in Achiote. How much data is enough? As Tracy (2010) states, "there is no magic time in the field" (p. 841). I wish that I had the opportunity to interview and interact with more people from the Panamanian Tourism Authority, ANAM, and other government agencies that influence development and policy in Achiote. Although I interviewed and frequently interacted with the local government representative, a more holistic perspective of institutional processes could be derived by including government representatives at higher levels. I do believe I had enough time be able to describe daily life and most important details of the greater picture; however I believe further time and maybe a Spanish class would allow for more comprehensive interpretation and analysis. I suppose I will have to develop a research plan for further time in

Achiote. However, I will first discuss the implications of further research on using a sustainable livelihoods approach to better understand and explain volunteer tourism.

Research Implications for Volunteer Tourism Theory and Practice

Currently, volunteer tourism literature lacks a particular approach to assess the impacts of volunteer tourism activities in a particular place that directly focuses on livelihoods. This sustainable livelihoods approach to understanding volunteer tourism incorporated an analysis of 1) the voices and perspectives involved in the partnership, 2) broader contexts, conditions, and trends to situate livelihoods, ecotourism and volunteer tourism in Achiote, 3) the livelihood resources and capacities of people in Achiote in the context of ecotourism and volunteer tourism, and 4) the livelihood strategies and recommendations from each stakeholder involved in ecotourism and volunteer tourism in Achiote. The livelihood outcomes, in this case, are not particularly outcomes, but a focus on future research and continual integration of the first four layers of the framework.

What I do know as a result of this study is that conversation and greater understanding among partners has been spurred. I also know that an appreciative approach to interviewing and interacting with the participants allowed for easier conversation and a positively framed dialogue within my interview responses. I know that using narrative and representing the results in the form of a story makes the story of livelihood change, development, ecotourism, and volunteer tourism in Achiote understandable. I know that the projects that the volunteers perform in Achiote reach far beyond the tangible products of bird watching platforms and trails, but extend beyond to intangibles as a source of empowerment, pride, and optimism for a local ecotourism group. Although ecotourism is a nascent industry in Achiote and the projects are not always

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used, Los Rapaces perseveres as an ecotourism group because they host a group of student volunteers for only one week per year.

Using this framework as a source of reference and lens to analyze volunteer tourism has resulted in a broader understanding of context and potential for the future, as well as more specific impacts of the projects on host community and other stakeholders' perspectives and lives. Further research in on the intersection of volunteer tourism and sustainable livelihoods has theoretical and practical value. Volunteer tourism projects impact local livelihoods in rural communities all over the world. Using the framework has helped situate how volunteer tourism fits into livelihoods and has provided a guide for understanding the much larger picture of the purpose of the projects. Further, discourse in collaborative volunteer tourism partnerships in an idyllic mutually beneficial volunteer tourism industry can help inform how the projects are chosen and implemented. Using a sustainable livelihoods approach for volunteer tourism has broader potential implications beyond this study as well.

For the bulk of this study, I refer to collaborative partnerships in volunteer tourism by discussing the processes between a single volunteer tourism organization sending a particular group of volunteer tourists to a specific community working with a host organization or local government on a particular community development or conservation-based project. However, the potential for collaboration within volunteer tourism reaches far beyond these constraints. The industry holds much potential for collaboration based on cause-based partnerships and a mix of stakeholders at multiple levels with seemingly similar goals. Not only is there opportunity for collaboration to occur among multi-scale partners for a global network, but further opportunity exists for stakeholders with the same role in the industry to collaborate in order to attain sustainable outcomes based on mutually determined goals and actions.

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Volunteer tourism organizations could make connections with one another and discuss

project goals for more cohesive, effective, and thorough project implementation and

management as well as key contacts and host organizations in local communities. Leaders of

volunteer tourism projects could share stories of triumphs and failures of leading projects and act

not only as a support system in the field, but also elicit communication and collaboration

strategies from one another, and even connect their volunteer teams in the field. Local and

national governments could learn from each other as a result of the impacts of volunteer tourism

activities and the effects on the communities in which they govern. Here there lies potential to

implement policy, such as allowing communities easier implementation process for

conservation-based initiatives or access to other resources. In addition, host communities without

experience or with new experience with volunteer tourism can learn from communities who have

experience, potentially empower each other to become more involved and participate in project

planning and management, and help each other better understand their role in the process. Host

organizations can better represent both volunteer tourism organization and host community

interests and better serve in their role as intermediary if they collaborate with other host

organizations in the region.

It may also inform volunteer tourism stakeholders of their own collaborative relationships

and may cause reflection and change in the way in which they communicate and collaborate.

How nature and the environment are framed in volunteer tourism is also important, particularly

in the context of the developing world and the integrated cross-cultural experiences between

volunteer tourists and host communities. "The ways we communicate powerfully affect our

perceptions of the living world" (Milstein, 2009, p. 345). Due to the increasing importance of

volunteer tourism as a global industry and mechanism for sustainable development, particularly

regarding environmental sustainability of developing countries, an exploration of these dynamics will help inform how volunteer tourism contributes to sustainable development and livelihoods.

Research Proposal:

A Longitudinal Study of Development and Sustainable Livelihoods in Rural Panama

The research implications for this area are vast and necessary for continual monitoring of the sustainable livelihoods of the people in Achiote. For future research stemming from this dissertation, I propose a longitudinal study of development, ecotourism, and sustainable livelihoods. If I had the opportunity, I would continue research in this area for the rest of my life. However, for the purpose of this proposal to define scope and breadth of future research, I will arbitrarily assign a ten year duration for the research plan. The investigators for the research include myself and two former faculty leaders of the Alternative Break groups. One is a political sociologist and the other a resource economist and the three of us have begun initial discussions for this research. Drawing on my expertise in ecotourism, sustainable tourism development, and sustainable livelihoods and the economic and sociological expertise of the two other investigators, we propose to develop a comprehensive research proposal to address the dynamics and complexity of development activities in Achiote. However, for the purpose of this dissertation I propose what I see as the most important aspects to address for future research as a result of this study. The existing partners include the university Alternative Breaks program, CEASPA, and Grupo Ecoturismo Los Rapaces. This research plan is composed of four key goals. Inherent in each research goal is continual monitoring, evaluation, and re-evaluation of the sustainable livelihoods of the people in the community. Additionally, continual engagement, feedback, and collaboration of and by present and potential partners will contribute to shared understanding and adaptive sustainable planning and management.

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The vision for the first phase of this research proposal is to develop and expand the partnership to build interest, partnership capacity, and collaboration. The purpose of this phase is to 1) share the story of the findings of this dissertation, 2) include and communicate with existing and potential partners in stakeholders, agencies, academics, and 3) develop a strategic plan for sustainable livelihoods and sustainable tourism development in Costa Abajo. Specifically, I will seek external partners in private entities and non-profits in ecotourism, sustainable development, and community involvement. Perhaps the most important connections to be made for this study are Panamanian government agencies such as the ATP and ANAM who can have influence on policy and legislation in the area and were identified as key actors in the future development in the region. Additionally, partnerships with other Panamanian and international NGOs, the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, the Center for Protected Area Management and Training, and other Panamanian universities can broaden recognition of key issues and social, economic, and ecological expertise. As a result of the contacts made to conduct this study, I already have several people involved in ecotourism and academia in Panama interested in a continuation of this project and the planning and monitoring of Costa Abajo, Colon. By developing and strengthening the partnership for this research, we will be able to draw on a more comprehensive understanding of the current and potential development plans in the region, engage people with more power and influence in policy and development in the region, and gain feedback on the stories and results presented in this study.

Key to the continuation of this study is the engagement of the community members of Achiote and surrounding villages. Their involvement was the most important aspect of this study and the success of future research in their area. This second phase comprises the community engagement portion of this research proposal and includes three goals based on information

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gathered in this dissertation. The first goal involves recurrent and consistent communication with the individuals I already interviewed for this study. Because I already have a baseline of the way they describe their livelihoods and their visions for the future, the ability to track changes in their livelihoods and gain their continual insight will be key to this future study. Also, my personal relationships with these individuals already exist and continuing to include them will aid in greater trust and insight to processes and changes at the community level. A second goal for future research includes making contacts with key individuals in the surrounding communities. The engagement of surrounding communities will develop a broader baseline for regional context and more cohesive involvement in decision making to avoid fragmented strategic planning and increase equality and empowerment among the communities. Additionally, a central vision for Los Rapaces is the involvement of their surrounding communities in ecotourism development.

A third goal for the engagement of community members is the integration of the children involved in the bioliteracy program in the schools. Environmental education and exposure to nature in school children has been found to affect their environmental affect and even career choices as adults (Pooley & O'Connor, 2000). Additionally, a key result of this study regarding visions and strategies for the future was the hope and responsibility many adults implore on the future of the children for conservation and tourism development in Achiote. By engaging students that are currently in CEASPA's bioliteracy program and those who have been involved in the past, we can see the kinds of choices they make over the years in how they attain their livelihoods and their visions for themselves and their community. I will also be able to learn how they view the changes in development and tourism related activities surrounding themselves and their community.

The myriad of people and organizations already involved in the development processes and activities in the region aids in sustained interest and collaboration for the future of this study. Future research using this study as baseline data has clear and relevant theoretical and practical implications. First, continual application of a sustainable livelihoods approach for understanding and explaining ecotourism and volunteer tourism in rural communities will help refine the framework and inform other researchers and practitioners in similar applications. Specifically, further use and modification of the sustainable livelihoods framework for understanding ecotourism and volunteer tourism could be useful in the areas of social and environmental vulnerability and resilience to the shocks and stresses of livelihood change as a result of development. It will also help inform practical project decisions for the volunteer projects implemented over the years.

Second, further engagement of project partners and integration of new partners will help develop a comprehensive strategy drawing on shared resources and expertise, create awareness of the need for clearer sustainable strategies and policy, and help implement development plans tailored to the livelihood needs and wants of the community of Achiote and their surrounding communities. Third, rarely are tourism studies conducted at such early stages of development. Because ecotourism as an industry and livelihood strategy in the area is in the initial stages of development with limited services and infrastructure, a longitudinal study of ecotourism development and the effects of the changes in development on livelihoods would provide a concrete understanding of various stages of development and progression of tourism development. Longitudinal research will help inform the development processes, influences, and strategies of a community faced with structural and individual livelihood change and development. It will provide a clear example of vulnerability and resilience to shocks and

stresses of infrastructure and tourism development. And perhaps most importantly, this future study will track changes in the lives and livelihoods of the people over the years, engage the community, and involve their voice and visions for their own future.

Conclusion

When I began this study, I had no idea that I was about to insert myself into a part of the world with so much compassion, joy, and love faced with so many barriers and potential environmental and social change. I thought I was going to study volunteer tourism by taking a sustainable livelihoods approach. I had years of experience studying and learning about the dynamics of development issues and the importance of bringing voice to local communities. I learned this is only the beginning of a life's worth of engagement and work. This place is worth a life's worth of work. I hope that I have the opportunity to experience it and put this plan into action. I want to reciprocate their sentiment of *tratar bien* in this *tranquilo* community.

Volunteer tourism is a force for development, and it is my sincerest hope that I and other researchers and practitioners continue to refine our understanding of the meaning volunteer tourism brings to people and places. However, I do believe I have already done so by bringing attention to the importance of providing voices and perspective and the potential of volunteer tourism and ecotourism in Achiote and in Panama. The ecotourism professionals that I interviewed for this study were puzzled by my interest in ecotourism in a place where virtually no one visits. The changes Achiote has experienced and currently is experiencing pervade the social, cultural, economic, and environmental fabric of their livelihoods. It is my sincere hope that this study will bring attention to the vision and nature of the partnership and the people that comprise it, but most importantly the vision and nature of the people of Achiote.

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Acronyms in Text

	English	*Spanish*
ANAM	National Environmental Authority	Autoridad Nacional del Ambiente
ARAP	Panamanian Authority of Aquatic Resources	Autoridad de Recursos Acuáticos de Panamá
ATP	Panamanian Tourism Authority	Autorización de Turismo Panameño
CEASPA	Panamanian Center for Research and Social Action	Centro de Estudios y Acción Social Panameño
CPAMT	Center for Protected Area Management and Training	
DFID	Department for International Development	
GEF	Global Environmental Facility	
IMF	International Monetary Fund	
NGO	Non-governmental organization	
SLFT	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework for Tourism	
TNC	The Nature Conservancy	
UN	United Nations	
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme	
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	
USAID	United States Agency for International Development	
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service	

Translations of Quotes from Spanish Interviews

It's calm and peaceful, and here I have everything, my farm, my work. And outside my work, I have my relationships, my friends. It's important to me to have my relationships and friendships. On the farm we have everything. We have pigs, hens, coffee, plantains, cattle on the farm. I work with my sister to milk the cows. We don't use injections or hormones. (Carlos, no. 1)

Es tranquilo, y bueno aquí tengo todo, mi finca, mi trabajo y afuera de mi trabajo, mis amistades, mis amigos, y que no tengo es importante para mi es para tener mi amistad, me gusta tener mi amistad. En la finca lo todo. Tenemos puercas, tenemos gallinas, café, plátanos, vacas, están en la finca. Trabajo con mi hermana de ordeña, las vacas sin inyecciones o hormones.

Everything, the natural environment, it's very calm and peaceful…There are many caring people, good people, and you can just chat with them, and it makes me happy. (Maria, no. 2)

Todos, el ambiente, es bastante tranquilo, y que mas… Hay muchas personas muy cariñosa, muy buenas, y uña puedo platicar con ellos, y me alegrada.

And now here we have light, we have roads, and it's growing a lot. And with the school, we have *telebásica* [a television education program] that we didn't have, and all the children finish at least sixth grade here and the things they have are growing…This is my wish, to better the community. (Florencia, no. 3)

Y allí tiempo tenemos luz, tenemos carreteras arriba, y así que crecía mucho. Y con la escuela tenemos telebásica que no la teníamos, y tratando de agrandando más cosas para terminan los

niños y en su sexto año aquí…y maneras que mejorarse la comunidad. Ese es mi deseo, para

mejorar la comunidad.

In other communities the land doesn't serve them, and in other countries they have very little

vegetation…We are special to have this vegetation (Florencia, Ap. II, no. 4).

En otras comunidades no sirven, y hay países que tiene muy poca vegetación…entonces

nosotros estamos especiales por esta vegetación.

You don't know when you're going to arrive, and you don't know when you're going to get

back. (Lucas, Ap. II, no. 5)

No sabes cuando llegas, y no sabes cuando regresas.

I discovered that it is good to conserve the birds, we had to form an ecotourism group and the

opportunity to aid tourists. The idea for the restaurant was born, to build the trails, bird watching

platforms, all of it. The tourists come but they would only stay somewhere else, they didn't come

here. They didn't come because there were only very small shops, there wasn't a restaurant, there

weren't attractions, there weren't services (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 6).

Descubrí en eso es buena para conservar los aves, hay que formar el grupo de ecoturismo, y la

oportunidad a ayudar los turistas, nació el idea por restaurante, de hacer los senderos,

miradores, todo esto. Que los turistas llegan pero solamente se quedaban allá, no llegamos acá.

No llegaron porque solamente las tiendacitas, no había restaurante, no había otros atractivos,

no había servicios.

Now my experience is like a partner to continue and struggle for the community. I am

always here, and for whatever they need, they call me. I can always help and support.

(Florencia, no. 7)

Ese es mi experiencia como compañera para seguir y luchar para la comunidad. Siempre estoy

aquí, para cualquiera cosa, me llaman. Siempre puede ayudando y apoyando.

Many people believed that the cooperative is without work, only money, money, money. Uh, no,

you have to work. They thought that it was Christmas. This is something that displeases me.

(Mateo, no. 8)

Muchas personas creían que la asociación es sin trabajo, solo money, money, money, uh no you

have to work. Pensaron que es Christmas. Eso es que no me gusta.

We have had passed difficult times, difficulties when we were being formed [as Los Rapaces].

When they have to eat and work and sacrifice for it. And because of this many people left

because they weren't in agreement, to work and to work, and nothing coming to them. But the

vision is participation to work for the future, but the future is longer than four years. I couldn't

admonish them for it. I don't blame the people that were in the group…because sometimes they

don't have the resources to work together, with the group (Ricardo, no. 9).

Pero hemos pasado momentos difíciles, difíciles cuando estamos construyendo. También

cuando ellos tienen que comer y trabajar y sacrificarlo. Y por eso muchas personas se fueron

saliendo porque no estaban de acuerdo, trabajar y trabajar, y no llevan a consigo. Trabajan

pero no de acuerdo a consigo. Pero la visión de es participación de trabajar para el futuro, pero

el futuro no es muy lejano de 4 años. Fue que no aconsejamos, eso es bastante difícil…porque a

veces no tienen los recursos para trabajar conjuntos, con el grupo, entonces se ven obligados.

They don't bring me if they don't want, and I will not do it. CEASPA works toward the people learning and if they have interest in the things we can do, we can help and support and do them. If they don't want to know how to do it, we don't involve ourselves. (Juan, no. 10).

Entonces, es la forma que la gente pueden tener apoyo en la formar que quiere. Yo participo, yo aprendí y yo hacerlo. Ellos no me trajeron, si no quieran, no lo hago. Si me lo vuelvan lo hagan y traerlo. Si CEASPA trabaja que es la gente aprenden y si interesa por algo, y porque conoce y hacerlo. Si no sabes hacerlo, no intereso.

I believe we are going to see more because there will be more roads and more transit and more danger and more of everything. More people will mix things up here. For now, it's calm and peaceful. But there could be more cars, more delinquency, more of everything. Lots of people will come from the city and be here, drug trafficking, everything. (Lucas, no. 11)

Creo que va a ver más como te digo, si hay más vías y más transitables y hay más peligro y más de todo, más revuelven por aquí, por allí, si ahora tranquilo. Pero puedan ser muchos carros, mucha delincuencia, mucho de todos, que vienen mucha gente de la ciudad que ven acá, narcotráfico, todo.

The people arrive here like the birds. They live here for a moment, find food here, stay here. They come down, relax, eat, stay. And I feel like the birds are the same thing. This brings me happiness for sure. (Yadira, no. 12)

Esta gente llegaron aquí como son las aves. Viven por ahí, encontraron comida. Llegaron aquí, se quedaron aquí, había comida, se bajaron, relajaron, comieron, se quedaron. Y entonces, yo digo, me siento que las aves así mismo. Pues alegría verdad.

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Because they want food, because they always have come to Panama, and when they don't find any food, and if they cannot find food, they die of hunger. They don't have strength to return. Here in Panama there are many projects to produce plants because the birds need more food. (Yamileth, no. 13)

Porque ellos quieren comida, porque siempre venían a Panamá, y cuando no encontraban nada, y si no pueden encontrar comida, morían de hambre, no tienen fuerza para regresar. Aquí en Panamá hay muchos viveros para producir plantas porque las aves necesitan más comida.

I like this because, in part, because I live here and I work close to here. And that I learn different things, because my profession is electricity, but I didn't like it. I studied and started to work with CEASPA. I didn't know anything about ecotourism, nothing. But, yes I like it because CEASPA worked with issues of culture, organic agriculture, home gardening, and issues of biology. I like animals, plants, and I learned a lot, many things. In high school I never used a computer, never, never in my life. And here I learned [to use] the computer, to use a microscope. Here we have a microscope. And many people from Canada, from the United States, from Europe, good people. From all of these places they come here, from local guide organizations, institutions, they come from exchanges from ANAM, from various provinces. I know many people. (Lucas, no. 14)

Me gusta esto, porque, el parte porque vive aquí lo mismo y trabajo aquí cerca. Y que aprendo cosas diferentes. Porque mi profesión es electricidad, y no me gusta, estudié y empecé a trabajar con CEASPA, no sabía nada de ecoturismo, de nada. Pero, sí me gusta porque CEASPA trabajaba con cuestiones de la cultura y agricultura orgánica, huerto casero, y estos cuestiones de biología, me gustan animales, plantas, y aprendí mucho, muchas cosas. En el colegio nunca usa una computadora, nunca, nunca en mi vida, y aquí aprendí la computadora, usar

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microscopio, de aquí tenemos una microscopio. Y como con mucha gente de Canadá, de los Estados Unidos, del Europa, de buena gente, de todo que vienen aquí, de guía locales organizaciones, instituciones, que vienen intercambio de ANAM, de varias provincias. Conozco mucho.

I feel good because they are not only at home (Yamileth, no. 15).

Me siento bien porque no están solamente en la casa.

It's joyful. They all work so much every day, the men, the women, all are equal (Yamileth, no. 16).

Todos alegre, todos trabajan mucho todos los días los barones, las mujeres, todo igual.

A vision for me is that they [people in the community] have the support they truly need. To me, no, no, I don't have interest so much in money. My interest is not so much in money, but as the other person. I am really interested in the person, for the person to feel good, that another is helping you to have an economic entry…In this group I feel happy. To make a change for difference, to live something impressive, because the person was below, but now is above (Ricardo, no. 17).

Una visión para mí, para ellos tienen que necesiten en apoyo de verdad que ellos tengan allí. A mí, no, no me interés en tanto dinero. A mí no interés en tanto dinero, pero como otro persona. A mí me interés por la persona. Por la persona se sienta bien, esa persona que está ayudándola y tengan una entrada económica…En este grupo yo me siento feliz. Es un cambio diferente, vive algo impresionante, porque estaba ya abajo, y está aquí arriba.

And when they leave, they saw us work together, and say oh wow, how interesting. In the time you spent in Panama, primarily in the very small community of Achiote, they treated each other well, loving people, caring for you, everything pretty. Interesting, huh? This is important to me. Money is a material thing that can be taken away, but friendship, service, you cannot take these things away…and afterward we are friends, this is worth something to me. It's interesting serving someone and that person feels satisfied with you. (Ricardo, no. 18)

Un día se toca conjunta, y dice oh wow, que interesante. Lo que pasabas en Panamá y principalidad en una comunidad chiquititas de Achiote, se trataron bien, y la gente cariñosa, cuidársete, todo preti [pretty], interesante no. Es que me importa. No me importa dinero. Dinero es algo material que se sacaba, pero la amistad, el servicio, esto no sacaba eso no…Y después son mi amigos, me vale nada, es algo interesante servía a la persona y la persona se siente satisfecha por ustedes.

We couldn't grow without the help of [the university student volunteer groups]. They made the bird watching platforms, the trail about coffee, the museum. Many things that we have that attract tourists are because of the students from [the university]. So now we have many, many things for you all (Yamileth, no. 19).

Nosotros no podríamos crecer más sin la ayuda de [los grupos de estudiantes voluntarios]. Hicieron mirador, ruta de café, casa museo. Tantas cosas que tenemos atractivos turísticos porque los estudiantes de [la universidad]. Así que tenemos mucho muchas cosas por ustedes.

There are many young people here in the community that study tourism. With this, one day it could be good, that people come to the community, groups, people that are going to demand

tourism guides. English is also necessary to have a group. There is always someone to translate, but this is nothing if you don't know how to speak [English] well (Yamileth, no. 20).

Hay muchas jóvenes aquí en la comunidad que estudian turismo, con esto un día, pueda ser bueno, a venga personas a la comunidad, grupos, bueno, personas que va a mandando, para ser guía de turismo. Inglés, también necesita, para tener un grupo. Y siempre hay una persona que traduce, pero no es nunca a saber hablar bien.

They can leave for other things. It's not sufficient (Florencia, no. 21).

Los jóvenes pueden salir por otras cosas. No es suficiente.

It's been two years since the restaurant project in Escobal, but it is still the same. It makes me sad because everything is important to me. This is the part that is ugly (Ricardo, Ap. II, no. 22).

Hace dos años del restaurante en Escobal, pero es lo mismo. Eso me da triste porque todo es de importancia para mí. Eso es la parte feo.

The wood is damaged [on the bird watching platforms] and the rocks of the trail are scattered. It distresses me and embarrasses me because others had to put other wood [on the platform] and rocks on the trail. We cannot take care of it because we don't have the materials and we can't pay for them. I started to maintain it, but when the people with the wood came, it wasn't good wood and the rain destroyed it. (Yamileth, no. 23)

La madera se dañó y las piedras al sendero. Como, me tengo pena porque los otros pusieron otro madera y piedras al sendero. Y nosotros no lo cuidamos porque no tenemos materiales o no pueden pagar por los. Y empiece mantenerlo, y entonces cuando vinieron, no serví la madera, de mucha lluvia.

Also like the restaurant in Escobal (Yamileth, no. 24).

Como el restaurante en Escobal.

If a group arrives at the Centro [Tucán], there is no ambiance and not much privacy and it's uncomfortable, or if there is a couple or another person that wants something more than what we have, and to prepare things and organize things for the people…Easygoing, something easygoing and straightforward, something that the tourists like….They can enjoy these things. It's very good but we don't have an equivalent of. They want to be good with the environment, relax, they want to sleep in a large bed with space with a very large television, air conditioning (Ricardo, no. 25).

De repente llegó un grupo, al Centro, si, no hay ambiente y no hay mucha privacidad o esta incomoda. De repente si hay una pareja también u otra persona que quieren tener algo de mismo y en una manera como hacer cosas de repente, y para la gente para preparar sus cosas y organizar las cosas…Sencilla, algo sencilla, algo que les gusta a las cosas de turistas…. Quiere disfrutar en las cosas. Es muy bien pero no lo equivocado. Quiere que estar bien, con el ambiente, relajarse, quieren dormir en una cama grande, que espacio, con el televiso grandísimo, aire acondicionado.

Before they passed through and didn't acknowledge anything. No one came here because there wasn't a highway to get here. And with the highway lots of people pass through, like this lots of people pass now, acknowledge us so [it will be] a good future. They all learn about us as well, the people will come to the community (Yamileth, no. 26).

Antes pasaban y no estaban reconocido nada, nadie no vienen aquí porque no hay carretera para salí y sin la carretera mucha gente pasan, como así mucha gente pasan ahora, reconocido

así que buen futuro. Todos aprenden de nosotros también, trabajan y la gente venga a la

comunidad.

I was born here and I didn't have resources, and with this position, we are sure to move forward in the town. Traditionally, it was difficult because we didn't have resources, so now we have some resources, but I am the middleman to the people (Oscar, no. 27).

Nací aquí y no tenía recursos, y con esta posición, nosotros seguros de comenzar en el pueblo. Hay una tradición era difícil porque no tenemos los recursos, entonces ahora, no tenía recursos, pero yo soy la mitad a la gente.

The children are like a seed…and like seeds, they are learning to conserve nature, the birds, and to protect the environment. The children explain [to their parents] not to throw trash on the ground and to conserve…They are growing mentally (Yamileth, no. 28).

Los niños son como una semilla.…Y como semillas, ellos están aprendiendo a conservar la naturaleza, las aves, proteger el ambiente, los niños explican de que no se tira basura para conservar…y ellos están creciendo mentalmente"

Additionally, there is much struggling and fighting. They [CEASPA and the bioliteracy program] are going to teach the importance of the environment. Not to throw garbage in the street, not to hurt the plants, not to treat animals poorly, and to not hurt anyone. So good are these things, because the trees, the flowers are precious. They need to give an example to them" (Florencia, Ap. II, no. 29).

También hay mucho luchando. Ellos van a enseñado el importancia del ambiente, no tiran basura en el calle, no hacer daño a las plantas, no tratan mal a los animalitos, y no hacen daño

a nadie. Qué bueno esas cosas. Porque son preciosos los árboles, los flores. Necesitan dan un

ejemplo a ellos.

We have to conserve the environment here, already God is conserving quite a bit. Also, they have to conserve this well because this is what we have. The future is in the hopes of the children…The children see what the adults do. The people come in buses, throw trash on the ground, and in the home as well. They don't take care, they cut down the trees, and they [the children] think, they don't care for our nature. The parents determine what the children are going to do. If there isn't anyone in the community that guides them, we are going to lose everything. (Maria, no. 30).

Tenemos que conservarlos por acá todavía Dios conservando bastante, entonces ellos de que conserva bueno eso es lo tengo, el futuro es en el esperanza de los niños y ellos nosotros para apoyan ellos. Ellos siempre cuidando, siempre da un ejemplo. Los niños ven como los adultos lo hacen. Le gente vienen en bus, tiran basura, en la casa también, no tiene cuidado, ellos tumban los árboles si ellos piensan o mi mama mi papa, y ellos no cuidan la naturaleza. Fijan como los padres en que van a hacer. Si no hay nadie en la comunidad que no oriente, todo va a perder.

I understand that Los Rapaces and the people working in the restaurant need more capacity, reinforcement, and commitment to the proposed development of the area as an ecotourism area. And to have a clearer concept of quality service, because the quality of service is causing complaint….because there's a filthy dog barking over here, cats and dogs over there. So it can be very folk in a sense, you have to have a space that's clean (Reina, no. 31).

Yo entiendo que Los Rapaces y la gente que está trabajando en el restaurante necesitan mucho más capacitación, reforzamiento, y compromiso con la propuesta de desarrollo de la zona como

una zona ecoturística. Y tener un concepto de calidad de servicio más clara, porque la calidad

de servicio está prestando en para de quejas. Presentación la gente de cosas, porque está sucio

perro habla por allí, y los gatos y perros están por allí. Entonces, puede ser muy folclórica en un

sentido que tiene que tener un espacio claforica.

We will always continue working, we will never fall, we are working, and continue
hope…always incorporating new things so that tourists come and see what we have…this is the
goal every year, to treat and attend to others and the tourists come (Yamileth, Ap. II, no. 32).

Siempre sigamos a trabajando, siempre no se caigamos, estamos trabajando, así que siga

esperando…Siga enlozado cosas nuevas para que vengan turistas y ver que yo tenga…eso es

una meta cada año, tratando a otros y las turistas vengan.

APPENDIX III

Excerpt from Field Notes

June 8, 2011

As I sit here on the bird watching platform that the first CSU volunteers built, I think I finally get why Los Rapaces and CEASPA quieren ecoturismo proyectos en Achiote. This morning Dari was talking about how in the last 5 years the price for a hectare of land in Achiote has increased from $2000 to $5000 due to immigration of Colombianos y otras personas. This is a big jump. At the same time, it probably took about five years for Achiote to realize that instead of a military training camp por vecinos, tiene una parque nacional con oportunidades para dinero internacional y otras oportunidades. The town is shifting rapidly, and will continue to do so especially with the opening of the through bridge to Achiote Road. Pero eso es el problema:

1) Every Panamanian and tourist we talked to in Panama City had never even heard of San Lorenzo, much less Achiote – cut off from the world! With no internet, services, real attractions other than the birding population which as we know don't stay for very long. Thought – should they focus on ecotourism or other means of economic development already in this place?

2) Basically every major tourist attraction in Panama comes down to surfing and national parks. Panama has some of the coolest NPs in the world, but the most well known of which are REALLY far from San Lorenzo, in particular La Amistad which is also close to Bocas, the most popular surfing destination in all of Panama, it's basically Panamanian Byron Bay from what I understand.

3) Colon is the closest city to Achiote, and tourists are urged not to go because it's dangerous and hay mucha violencia

4) Achiote is NOT la comunidad de entrada por el parque as I had originally thought. Toursts have to pass all the way through the park and more to get to Achiote and there is no road to get to the fort from Achiote → therefore no real reason for birders to even come here

5) No Panamanian guia even mentions Achiote, solamente el calle Achiote por los aves.

6) CEASPA barely has funds to sponsor their own projects much less a marketing plan for Achiote

Is this really what they need/want? So interested to start las entrevistas! This place is super interesting AND I think it can be representative of many similar communities with the rise of protected areas establishment.

June 10, 2011

Today Brittany and I witnessed a meeting between Los Rapaces and the San Lorenzo park manager (?) Felipe, Dari, y otros con ATP. What an experience! The meeting was to determine whether Los Rapaces was going to become a cooperative or an NGO. Casi 10 personas que trabajan con ATP vienen al reunion. More people than actually needed at this point in my opinion, as only one of the women did most of the talking and it appeared, at some points, as if they were ganging up on Felipe. They asked him to write a proposal about what's going on in the surrounding towns and around San Lorenzo and how Los Rapaces contributes to ecotourism in the area, or something like that. It definitely felt like an insider's experience as to

how tourism occurs at the organizational level in Panama. The woman who worked for the ATP who did most of the talking was definitely used to her job, very straightforward, to the point, friendly but direct, and I felt as if toward the end Felipe felt like he was being put in an uncomfortable position and/or being asked hard questions. Toward the end of these really long meetings it's very hard for me to understand because not only has my brain been overworkded due to trying to speak Spanish, but I'm also trying to process the entire meeting up to that point so my brain is working overtime.

Yesterday Britt and I had the opportunity to visit San Lorenzo finally! Visiting there was almost as exciting as coming to Achiote for the first time, we study and hear about and learn about and talk about these places and finally we go there! At first imporession, it's small, the Castillo is very far from the entrance, and it is now finally confirmed, without a doubt, that there is absolutely no reason for anyone visiting the park to also visit Achiote. There are no signs, no advertisements, and you have to go out of your way in order to get there! Which brings me back to the persistent question - IS ECOTOURISM FOR ACHIOTE?

At this point, I don't know. Another persistent issue that I'm running into is that the more I talk to people the more I find that it is very difficult for them to separate VT from ecotourism. So there is already an existing disconnect in the kinds of projects that VTists can do. From what I've gathered they really think that VTists can only be used for ecotourism development, leaving out SO many other avenues for which VTists can benefit a community.

San Lorenzo was awesome though. Super lush and diverse, just like I remember Costa Rica to be. It is also very difficult to see wildlife with an untrained eye because of this reason. I'm sure there were several times we passed by important birds or monkeys before we had the

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ranger with us because we just didn't know how to look for them. For birders especially, a guide is necessary. Moreover, many of the trained and BILINGUAL guides live in Panama City, therefore diverting any influx of real or even indirect local economic benefits out of Achiote and also out of Colon entirely.

The park rangers who Felipe introduced us to, Vicente and Alfredo, were enormously helpful and we had a lovely conversation about issues with national parks and San Lorenzo specifically. Major points that were discussed include: a) the difficulty of building a trail system when roughly 1/3 of the park is inaccessible due to unexploded ordnance, b) the issue of hunting and poaching in and around national parks in Panama and the US (poaching is definitely an issue but doesn't seem to be as much as other developing countries with large and pricey big game – poaching mainly occurs due to subsistence purposes and is not a major issue), c) entrance fees and how they make money, now I really wish I would've been able to understand this more quickly and easily because when we were there, these two men were the only rangers in the park, for regulation *and* fee collecting, and they weren't even there half the day! Where does the money come from? How is this park sustained 12 years after its inception? Ay! I just really freaking wish I spoke fluent Spanish! Also, I feel like I'm getting kind of worse because no one really corrects me. When we were hanging out with Eric and Luigi, they spoke English and Spanish fluently so they would say things in both languages so I could hear both, or at least correct me when I sounded stupid. I'm really hoping these interviews will help with the process of listening and sustaining a conversation, writing it down, and then analyzing it for meaning.

APPENDIX IV: Examples of Categories of Interview Responses

Category Theme	Frequent Key Words	Example Interview Excerpts
Ecotourism	Guide Tour Community Birds Believe	"Y eso es una meta cada ano, tratando otro y las turistas vengan…y turistas se siempre alegre, contento, disfruta, respecto, de estas partes quedan, es una de los motivos del otro. Más de mi es siempre ecoturismo." "In terms of their attractions, like, seriously the first time I saw Fort San Lorenzo, I was like shut the front door! Like, this is just out here and nobody's here? This is like, you know what I mean? I mean, it's just absolutely fascinating, it's just out here and it's beautiful and like the boat ride down the river and stuff is really cool and I just could not believe that. And I mean the bird watching has its niche that people will come for the birds."
Conservation	Birds Conserve Land Trees Environment	"Vive en fabrica en los países con todo toxico, y no hay aire libre, okay un comparación de estos países, no hay un medio ambiente. Eso es una ideas a ellos. La gente de allí no puede entender la importancia de la media ambiente. Todo eso que hoy en día, entonces solo es que usará más cosas orgánicas que contaminar menos. El producto toxico, para conservar el medio ambiente, no quiero usar algo toxico." "Y me gusta mucho esto, vivimos aquí en Achiote, es un lugar que tiene mucha vegetación y los aves abundan bastante…La gente allí mucha tumba los árboles mucho bombero, parten vacas, un tiempo no lluvia a nada, mucho sol. Ahora la gente quiere sombra, ya cambia bastante. También allí el sol es bien caliente, tumba mucha madera. Siempre se proteja las aves aquí y la naturaleza. Las aves necesitan eso."
Development	Think Build Community Tourism Idea	"Because in the US, you know, prostitution is done completely different than in Latin America. So yeah, so we talked a little bit about, well this is like, this is actually far less sexy than you think. So we talked a little bit about who would those women be, why would they be okay with that being there, why wouldn't the police shut it down. Which is development…So that kind of stuff, the people of Achiote don't particularly like to talk about it too much but that interests me." "That's the kind of support we got from the World Bank on this project. Amazing, I mean, really amazing. I never worked so well with any donating agency. They were amazing. Now obviously it was the people that they believed in it. Now this whole thing about the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor, it was a very, very attractive idea and concept."

Research Purpose Introductory Letter to Community Distributed Upon Arrival

Achiote, 6 de junio de 2001

ESTIMADOS AMIGOS Y AMIGAS

A partir del lunes 6 de junio de 2011, estarán en la comunidad de Achiote las jóvenes **Emily Eddins** y **Brittany Bernard**, de la Universidad Estatal de Colorado, Estados Unidos. Emily estará realizando su Tesis Doctoral con la ayuda de su asistente Brittany.

El tema de su Tesis de graduación se relaciona con los trabajos que han realizado los estudiantes de la Universidad Estatal de Colorado, que han visitado Achiote desde hace cinco años.

En algún momento, ellas estarán visitándole para realizarle algunas preguntas, le agradecemos la atención que puedan brindarle a ellas; y aprovechamos la oportunidad, desde este momento, para invitarles a la actividad de cierre y despedida de las estudiantes el sábado 9 de julio de 2011. Detalles sobre esta actividad se le hará saber acercándose la fecha.

Atentamente,

Daniel Holness C.
Programa de Educación Biológica

Invitation for Final Community Presentation
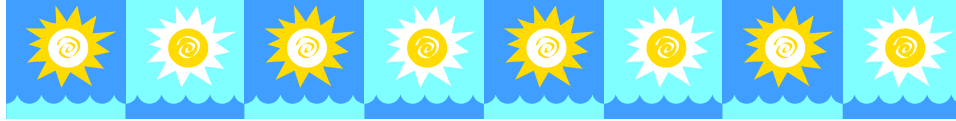
ESTIMADOS AMIGOS Y AMIGAS

Se invitan ustedes a la actividad de cierre y despedida de nosotros **el sábado 9 de julio de 2011 a las 5 de la tarde en el restaurante.**

El tema de esta actividad es para compartir nuestra investigación sobre los temas de nuestras conversaciones con sus vecinos, la vida bonita en Achiote, y las relaciones con los trabajos que han realizado de los estudiantes de la Universidad Estatal de Colorado, que han visitado Achiote desde hace cinco años cada marzo.

<u>Esperamos que ustedes puedan asistir esta celebración.</u> Queremos compartir este día especial y la despedida con nuestra familia aquí en Achiote, ¡ustedes!

Mil gracias y abrazos,

Emily y Brittany

APPENDIX VII

Community Interview Script

Hola, me llamo Emily Eddins. Gracias por me dan su tiempo para participar en esta investigación.

Las metas de esta investigación son para prometer y realizar la colaboración entre los procesos de entre participantes de turismo de los voluntarios para identificar, poner en práctica, y dirigir proyectos mejor para dar el máximo beneficio a los vidas diarias de las residencias en Achiote y los sistemas ecológicas cerca del campesino. Y la segunda meta es para entender el papel de turismo de los voluntarios puede interpretar en los esfuerzos de conservación colaborativo.

Durante varios meses, empezando el junio de 2011, voy a conocer algunos miembros de su comunidad aquí en Achiote para aprender y entender sus sustentos y el papel de turismo de los voluntarios en su campesino. Estoy emocionada para las conversaciones y conocimientos sobre sus experiencias y como es la vida en Achiote. Estoy trabajando en esta investigación para parte de mis estudios doctoral a Colorado State University en el departamento del los dimensiones humanos de recursos naturales. La meta es para recoger conocimiento de personas que viven en Achiote y cerca de Achiote que puede ayudar los proyectos de voluntarios para entregar la mejor situación para los sostenibles de las personas que viven en Achiote y cerca de Achiote.

Para entienden mejor Ud. y la experiencia de su campesino sus papel en turismo de los voluntarios y los socios colaborativos con turismo de voluntarios. Deseo que entreviston varias personas en su campesino. Ud. fue una recomendación de [quien] para entrevistar a causa de su papel en Achiote. Me gustaría saber si Ud. le gustaría también, participar en una conversación

con otras personas que estoy entrevistando para ayudar en la creación de una mapa de temas y un dibujo de cómo personas viven sus vidas en Achiote, y el papel de turismo de voluntarios en su campesino.

La entrevista será muy informal. Por favor Ud. se siente relajadora. Deseo que escuchar a sus experiencias con turismo de los voluntarios en Achiote y entender mejor las relaciones Ud. tiene con el campesino y las relaciones con los voluntarios trabajando en Achiote. La entrevista será alrededor 45-90 minutos e incluirá varias preguntas. Podría más corto o largo, depende en su interés y tiempo libre. ¿Es ese momento un buen momento para la entrevista o prefiere Ud. conducir la entrevista en otro momento o lugar? [take note of time and place – OR – if they agree to begin now, thank them and continue with]

Si es posible, por favor puedo usar la grabadora para la conversación con Ud.? Me gustaría tener la abilidad a escuchar nuestro conversación otra vez con la grabadora para ser segura en lo que me dijo. No voy a compartir la información de la grabadora o mis notas con alguien y destruirá estas materiales cuando estoy terminado con mi proyecto. La información que Ud. comparte conmigo será completamente confidencial. Los resultados finales escribirán en un resumen por organizaciones de turismo de voluntarios y academia. Será una manera buena para las organizaciones a saber cuáles servicios y asistencia deben continuar a usar por otras comunidades con turismo de voluntarios. La información que compartirá no será conectada con las personas que participan en las entrevistas. Por favor, dime Ud. si le siente incómodo en algún manera, entonces podrá cambiar cualquier cosa para Ud. más cómodo.

¿Quiere Ud. participar en esta entrevista conmigo?

[If no, discontinue interviewing process:] Ok, gracias por su tiempo e interés.

[If yes:] Está bien con Ud. si uso la información de esta entrevista para construir mi proyecto final, solo si no uso su nombre en relación a su comentario?

[If no, discontinue interviewing process:] Ok, gracias por su tiempo e interés.

[If yes:] Está bien con Ud. si uso la grabadora porque no voy a compartir la cinta con alguien y lo destruirá después del proyecto está terminando?

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

[Questions regarding volunteer tourism's role in the community:]

1. ¿Qué sabe Ud. de los estudiantes de la universidad de Colorado que visitan Achiote cada ano? ¿Esta Ud. parte de esto? ¿Su familia? ¿Amigos? ¿Cómo le ha involucrado con ellos?

[Questions regarding benefits of volunteer tourism]

2. ¿En qué actividades ha participado? ¿Y en qué grado?

[Questions regarding livelihood aspects of projects in Achiote]

3. ¿Qué cosas traen alegría en su vida diaria? ¿Cuál es su rutina diaria? ¿Cómo cambia su rutina durante el año?

APPENDIX VIII

CEASPA Interview Script

Hola, me llamo Emily Eddins. Gracias por me dan su tiempo para participar en esta investigación.

Las metas de esta investigación son para prometer y realizar la colaboración entre los procesos de entre participantes de turismo de los voluntarios para identificar, poner en práctica, y dirigir proyectos mejor para dar el máximo beneficio a las vidas diarias de las residencias en Achiote y los sistemas ecológicas cerca del campo. Y la segunda meta es para entender el papel de turismo de los voluntarios puede interpretar en los esfuerzos de conservación colaborativo.

Durante varios meses, empezando el junio de 2011, voy a conocer algunos miembros de su comunidad aquí en Achiote para aprender y entender sus sustentos y el papel en las relaciones entre CEASPA, CSU, y personas que viven en Achiote. Estoy emocionada para las conversaciones y conocimientos sobre sus experiencias y como es la vida en Achiote. Estoy trabajando en esta investigación para parte de mis estudios doctoral a Colorado State University en el departamento del los dimensiones humanos de recursos naturales. La meta es para recoger conocimiento de personas comprometen en su organización, personas que viven en Achiote, y personas comprometen en los proyectos de voluntarios de CSU que puede ayudar los proyectos de voluntarios para entregar la mejor situación para los sostenibles de las personas que viven en Achiote y cerca de Achiote.

Para entienden mejor su experiencia trabajando con CEASPA sus papeles en turismo de los voluntarios y los socios colaborativos con turismo de voluntarios. Deseo que entrevisten varias personas en de su organización. Usted fue una recomendación para entrevistar a causa de

su papel trabajando con CEASPA, CSU, y personas que viven en Achiote. Me gustaría saber si usted le gustaría también, participar en una conversación con otras personas que estoy entrevistando para ayudar en la creación de una mapa de temas y un dibujo de cómo personas CSU y viven sus vidas en Achiote, y el papel de turismo de voluntarios en Achiote.

La entrevista será muy informal. Deseo que entender a sus experiencias con turismo de los voluntarios en Achiote y entender mejor las relaciones usted tiene con Achiote y las relaciones con CSU y los voluntarios trabajando en Achiote. La entrevista será incluir varias preguntas.

No voy a compartir la información con alguien y destruirá estas materiales cuando estoy terminado con mi proyecto. La información que usted comparte conmigo será completamente confidencial. Los resultados finales escribirán en un resumen por organizaciones de turismo de voluntarios y academia. Será una manera buena para las organizaciones a saber cuáles servicios y asistencia deben continuar a usar por otras comunidades con turismo de voluntarios. La información que compartirá no será conectada con las personas que participan en las entrevistas. Sus opiniones y respuestas y apoyo son las razones porque tengo este estudio. Nada sería posible sin Uds.

1. ¿Puede Ud. Describe el trabajo de CEASPA? ¿Su misión? ¿Su historia?

2. ¿Cuánto tiempo tiene Ud. con CEASPA?

3. ¿Cómo cambiaba o crecía CEASPA durante los años?

4. ¿Qué empieza Ud. su participación con CEASPA? ¿Qué fue la primera atracción a trabajar aquí?

5. ¿Qué indica que CEASPA es especial o diferente de otras ONG que conoce Ud.?

6. ¿Qué piensa Ud. está en el corazón del éxito de CEASPA?

7. Puede Ud. dígame sobre otros grupos o personas que apoyan CEASPA y su trabajo.

8. ¿Qué permita el éxito de estas relaciones?

9. ¿Cuáles destrezas usa Ud. con la más frecuencia en su trabajo?

10. ¿Qué parte de su trabajo tiene Ud. el más orgullo?

11. ¿Si regreso en cinco años, qué piensa Ud. va a ser la imagen de CEASPA?

12. ¿Si un jefe de un ONG va a empezar la participación de estudiantes voluntarios en una comunidad y quisieron aprender de su experiencia, qué es el mejor aviso Ud. daría a él o ella?

Si tiene experiencia en Achiote, por favor continúe a darme sus respuestas estas preguntas. Si no tiene experiencia en Achiote, mil gracias por sus respuestas y su tiempo.

13. Puede Ud. explica su experiencia en Achiote.

14. ¿Cómo es su relación con los residentes de Achiote?

15. ¿Qué piensa Ud. permite por esta relación?

16. ¿Cómo integra Achiote en la selección de los proyectos de los estudiantes de CSU? ¿Cómo seleccionar este método?

17. Puede Ud. dígame su cuento favorito del trabajo con CSU o Achiote por lo general.

18. Puede Ud. describe algunos éxitos del trabajo de CEASPA en Achiote. ¿En otro lugar? ¿Por

    qué piensa Ud. estos funcionaron?

19. ¿Qué parte de su trabajo piensa Ud. los residentes de Achiote valoran el mejor?

20. ¿Cómo sabe Ud. cuando hice un trabajo bueno?

21. ¿Cómo sabe Ud. cuando los proyectos afectar la comunidad de Achiote?

22. Puede Ud. dígame sobre un relación entre Achiote y los voluntarios de CSU.

23. Puede explicar su relación con CSU.

24. ¿Qué permite el éxito de esta relación con CSU?

25. ¿Qué es su parte favorito de su relación con CSU? Y con los estudiantes?

26. Puede explicar las situaciones entre CEASPA, los estudiantes de CSU, y los residentes de

    Achiote trabajaban buenos juntos.

27. ¿Qué piensa Ud. va a ser su relación entre CSU y Achiote en el futuro?

Mil gracias por su tiempo, apoyo, y respuestas. Por favor, recuerde que sus respuestas son

voluntarias y confidenciales. Creo que la relación colaborativo entre CEASPA, CSU, Los

Rapaces, y los residentes de Achiote es un buen ejemplo para otras comunidades con relaciones

con voluntarios y ecoturismo, especialmente porque fue evidente en las entrevistas completas

cuando yo visité a Panamá y Achiote. Mil gracias y abrazos.

APPENDIX IX

Volunteer Tourism Leader Script

Hi, my name is Emily Eddins. Thank you for taking your time to participate in this research.

The goals of this research are first to promote and enhance collaboration among volunteer tourism stakeholders to better identify, implement, and manage projects that maximize benefits of the daily lives of people in Achiote and their surrounding ecological systems, and second understand the role that volunteer tourism can play in collaborative conservation efforts.

Over the course of several months beginning in June 2011, I will meet with several CEASPA members to learn about and understand your role the partnership between Colorado State University, CEASPA, and people living in Achiote. I'm looking forward to having a dialogue and learning about your experiences and what it's like to be involved in a cross-cultural partnership within volunteer tourism. I am doing this as a part of my graduate studies at Colorado State University in the Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources. The goal is to gather knowledge from people involved in the volunteer projects from Colorado State University, people involved in CEASPA, and people living in Achiote and that will aid current and future volunteer projects that best suit the livelihoods of people living in and around Achiote.

[For participants]

To best understand your experience working with CSU's Alternative Breaks, your role in volunteer tourism, and the collaborative partnerships within volunteer tourism, I wish to interview a variety of different people working with CSU, CEASPA and people living in

Achiote. You were recommended by (insert by whom) to interview because of your role in leading CSU student volunteers to Achiote.

The interview will be very informal. Please feel relaxed. I wish to hear your experiences with volunteer tourism and deepen understanding of the relationships involved in operating and implementing volunteer projects in Achiote. The interview will be about 45-90 minutes and include several questions. It could be shorter or longer depending on your interest and time available. Is this a good time for the interview or would you prefer to meet at another time and specific place?   [take note of time and place – OR – if they agree to begin now – thank them and continue with]

If possible, may I tape record the conversation with your permission? I would like the opportunity to listen to our conversation again using the tape recorder to make sure that I correctly understand what you say. I will not share the tapes or my notes with anyone and I will destroy these materials at the end of the project. The information you share with me will be completely confidential. The final results will be written in a summary form for volunteer tourism organizations. This will be a great way for the organizations to know which services and assistance they should continue to provide communities where volunteer tourism takes place. Any information I share will not be able to be connected to any of the people whom I interviewed. Please let me know if you feel uncomfortable in any way, so that I may make changes to help you feel more comfortable.

Are you willing to participate in an interview with me?

[If no, discontinue interviewing process:] OK, thank you for your time and interest!

[If yes:] Is it alright if I use the information you share with me in a final report as long as I do not reveal that they were your comments?

[If no, discontinue interviewing process:] OK, thank you for your time and interest!

[If yes:] May I use the tape recorder since I will not share the tape with anyone and will destroy it when I've finished the project?

[If no, do not use tape recorder during interview.]

[If yes, begin using tape recorder and start the interview.]

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

[Questions regarding volunteer tourism leaders' experience:]

4. Can you describe your experience leading volunteer projects in Achiote?

[Questions regarding role of volunteers in Achiote]

5. Can you tell me about the role volunteers play in Achiote?

[Questions regarding partnerships within volunteer tourism]

6. How would you describe the partnerships between CSU, CEASPA, and Achiote residents? What makes that partnership work?