## Introduction

The volunteer placement scheme represents a strange and remarkable process with a forty-year history in its present form. A placement comprises a two or three year period during which a person from an economically-rich country and colleagues[1] in an institution in an economically-poor country or region work together in their professional capacities, living in similar conditions and receiving roughly the same salaries. Volunteers include men and women of all ages, as do their colleagues; placements cover a wide range of professions and occupations. Participants often begin with little common language or other knowledge of each other's backgrounds. They gradually understand more about the similarities and differences in their understanding of the world as they work together.

Such placements have been given little systematic consideration outside the practice-orientated volunteer agencies that facilitate them. Inside these agencies, there has long been a tension between an interpretation of the volunteer placement as a tool of technical cooperation for development, and a more holistic understanding of the benefits which such a process can yield. The use of public funding can only be justified by defining the focus as development, and yet many of those involved recognise particular and valuable but unmeasurable outcomes of this human encounter.

It was this issue within my own experience of volunteering, which stimulated the exploration which is central to this thesis. I worked as a science teacher for three years in what is now Papua, Indonesia, and found that I could not give a clear account of what I knew had been a rich learning experience, not only for me but for some of my colleagues. As a form of international development, volunteer placements stand out in terms of the length of time that practitioners from North and South[2] work alongside each other as professionals, and in the materially equal terms under which they do so. Yet little is understood about the processes involved in such encounters. The case in this study is a small set of volunteer placements in Indonesia; the issue explored is learning in such placements. The study will not reach generally valid conclusions about volunteer placements; the main outcome is a reappraisal of the process and significance of learning in North-South encounters.

Much of the available information on volunteer placements is rather one-sided. Systematic information about volunteer placements is sent from the volunteers themselves to the volunteer agency, where it is transformed into stories of those various volunteer's successes and failures, and collated into the successes and failures of a volunteer programme in a particular country. Employers have some input; some sections of reports to fill in, some opportunities to give their

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[1] The term 'colleague' is used throughout the thesis to signify the Indonesian people working in an institution in which a volunteer participated.

[2] Whilst the geography of the 'South' is complicated by Australasia, there is nevertheless a helpful complementarity to this categorisation, which avoids the inherent value judgement of numerical labels. The rhetorical power of a phrase such as 'Two-Thirds World' is inappropriately distracting.

view of progress to an agency officer. But in general, it is the volunteer's view that dominates this information: analytical frameworks are familiar to them, and foreign to the employer; colleagues of the volunteer have almost no opportunity to give their view.

Furthermore, most of the existing information focuses on the progress of the placement as an entity, as opposed to development of the institution or individuals within the local context. It is information about activities in which the volunteer has been involved, and about relationships between the volunteer and most immediate colleagues; the perspective is of the placement as an entity in itself, isolated from the other changes going on.

To generate more holistic data about the volunteer placement within its setting, it was important to consider the placement from different perspectives. In the first two chapters, placements are considered in terms of their different meanings for participants from North and South. In later chapters, models of social change are used which focus attention on the relationships between context, activity and interaction between individuals.

Case study has been central to the exploration of placement processes, because each placement is fascinatingly individual, and depends not on one person or personality but the relationship of many elements. Four case studies form the basis of Chapter Five. These four placements are surrounded by over twenty others in the same region of Indonesia, data from which is used to contribute to preliminary arguments in early chapters, and to extend and develop the argument in Chapter Seven.

The main data generation for this study was carried out in a period of fieldwork in Indonesia during the early months of 1998. I visited about twenty institutions which were either currently or previously host to a volunteer, in a materially impoverished area to the east of Bali called Nusa Tenggara, the main islands of which are Timor, Flores and Sumba. I was sufficiently fluent in Indonesian to be able to interview Indonesians in those institutions and localities and to observe directly the activities in which volunteers and colleagues were engaged. In those institutions where the placement had finished some time earlier, I was able to generate some data on the longer-term effects of placements.

This period of fieldwork was preceded by interviews with volunteers before they left the UK and continued during visits home or after the end of the placement. Records held by volunteer agencies suggested an important additional perspective. Contact by email and letter extended the engagement with both volunteer and colleagues. Where necessary I sought and received the help of Indonesian friends in translating case studies and letters, to guard against misunderstandings through remote communication.

My own experience and position as a returned volunteer has greatly influenced both the choice of this area for study and the way in which I have gone about it. A significant strand of data comes from my own participation in a volunteer placement, and in generating data I consistently represented myself to colleagues and volunteers as an ex-volunteer. Aspects of the practice of volunteering were clear to me that would remain opaque to a researcher without such experience.

Extracts from a case study of my placement appear throughout the thesis, and the whole case study is included as Appendix I.

The placements which I have explored here are associated with several volunteer agencies from UK, Australia, Canada and in one case, USA; but the UK agency VSO is easily the most significant in terms of the number of placements in this region of Indonesia and in the access to placements and related data afforded to me.

This research develops a perspective of the volunteer placement in context; part of a set of relationships and learning processes going on within and beyond a dynamic institution which predates the arrival of the volunteer and continues after her or his departure. In the final chapter, I consider what such a perspective contributes to the development agenda.

In order to preserve the confidentiality of volunteers and colleagues, names and other details have been altered as appropriate. Several volunteer-sending agencies in the UK, Australia and Canada agreed to provide information about placements in Indonesia, and to allow me to seek access to them.

## Chapter One: Volunteer Placements in Context

There are many ways in which one could approach the study of volunteer placements. One is by way of critical theory, most obviously in search of neo-colonial patterns of thought and practice, the continuation of oppressive structures. Volunteering can certainly be read that way, as it is in the first part of an interview extract with a volunteer who had maintained her connection with a British volunteer agency during the nine years since her return from Sierra Leone:

> '[Volunteering] is very neo-colonialist.. in that a lot of people doing VSO are middle-class people searching for some meaning in life, for something different.. the kinds of motivation if people are honest with themselves is that people really admire you for going overseas and people think you're really great.. There's all kinds of emotions for doing that.. I wonder … what counterparts in the developing world really do think about a VSO volunteer turning up... I think VSO volunteers experience positions of power and influence that they would never experience in their own country.. feel importance that they would never have in their own country when they go and work overseas. So I think all of those things are true and if we all looked at ourselves completely honestly some of those things are or were our motivations for going to work in the developing world. Now I don't have any problem admitting that now, I probably wouldn't at the time but I've thought about it quite a lot. That is one side of things. [returned volunteer, sierral:136a] [3].

A critical approach is certainly valid, but it makes it difficult to do justice to the learning that might arise from the process. I believe that there are outcomes of volunteering placements and much to be learnt through studying them which are missed through an ideologically informed critical analysis of the relative positioning of the participants. To be critical in this sense is to evaluate in respect of an external viewpoint; even though positive features can be brought out, the data are read only in one dimension. Mangena (1992), for instance, studied donor countries' use of expatriates 'as a strategy for resolving problems in underdeveloped countries' (p.1) partly through a survey of 150 prospective and 250 returning UK volunteers, and concluded that 'despite the potential of expatriate assignments to transfer technology to underdeveloped countries, they form a poor overall strategy because of their vulnerability to many problems' (ibid. p.2). It would not be too surprising if this conclusion were found to apply more generally; but it is not only in respect of their capacity to deliver technological skills that volunteer placements can be evaluated.

I propose a different approach, and consequently a different research strategy, coming to the problem of learning through a more general question, 'What is going on in volunteering?' Volunteer placements can be seen to comprise complex 'relationships of experience, production and power' (Castells 1998, p.349) and I believe that these relationships are intrinsically linked to the emerging learning. My intention is to understand those relationships better, primarily by

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[3] Quotations from field data are referenced in a standard form. Where it is needed for clarity, the respondent's name, the relevant date and place are noted. The reference ends with a code which corresponds to the data files included on the disc at the back of the thesis or available from the author on request. The first part of the code signifies the location of the placement involved (**EL**: Ende-Larantuka; **EF**: East Flores; **I**: Irian Jaya, now Papua **JAK**: Jakarta; **LOM**: Lombok; **M**: Merauke; **S**: Sumba; **sierral**: Sierra Leone; **WF**: West Flores). These areas are clearly shown on the maps in Chapters One and Four. The second part of the code refers to the line number established within the NUD*IST data management system (Richards and Richards, 1991).

careful attention to the experience of those who have been or are participating in them. The returned volunteer who spoke about neo-colonialism continued as follows:

> 'One of the things that came out of my time in Sierra Leone is that... in a sense it was very difficult teaching there, and most of the pupils didn't pass the exams and I do remember saying to one of the teachers in the school who became a good friend of mine and I said "You know, why do you want us here? We don't actually help at all, the exam results haven't improved. You know I've come in, I've disrupted things, I've been rude sometimes about the way you do things, so what's the point in having me here, really?" And he said, "You know you're quite right, you know, all those things you have done", he said "But in a sense", he said, "You've been here long enough", he said, "It's a sense of solidarity. That you cared enough to come and live here. That you now know us very, very well. We know you, and we know you're not very different to us". He said: "And you're not, you've got a mum and a dad who care about you and a sister.. and we've seen your mum, she's come here", he said. "It's that that has been significant for us. It's the solidarity of having somebody come and live with us, in our community, under similar circumstances to the way in which we live (OK you can depart at any time) and you will go back and you will... it doesn't happen all the time.. if anything happens here you will tell everybody in your own country that something's going on in Sierra Leone, and that we have a link to something different, and you have a link to something different". And that one conversation - you don't think about things when people talk to you straight away - made me think, Well yeah, perhaps that's all that happened… that I gave the village a sense of solidarity… ' [returned volunteer, sierral:136b].

This account suggests that relationships of experience, production and power interact in a complex way, which may only be understood through careful attention to participants' experiences. In the story of this placement, power appears to reside initially with the volunteer, who first accepts the admiration of folks at home for making a sacrifice (of security, safety, career prospects) for the sake of others, and is subsequently accorded a role as expert in the host community. But production proves problematic; change is never a simple process, and the 'expert' soon seems to combine ineffectiveness with disruption. Power shifts as relationships are established; it becomes possible for this volunteer to ask a colleague a question about performance and get a straight answer; and his answer links up with other important aspects of relationship. The experience of being together has built a sense of solidarity which is ultimately highly valued by those participants.

A possibility raised in this example is that it is immersion in each other's lives, from the small details of everyday business to the sharing of momentous decisions, which is a particularly important feature of the volunteering encounter. When people live or work together for several years, it is hard to keep the masks of distance in place. This volunteer's experience, and that of many others, show that during this encounter it becomes difficult to hide away such features of the self as attitudes to family, need for privacy, or deeply-held beliefs.

I believe that an understanding of what is going on in volunteering is impossible without careful attention to the experience of the participants, developing an understanding of what a volunteer placement is for those who participate in it. The above example also introduces a problem: the voice of the local colleague is heard here only through the account of the volunteer. In this study, the voice of local colleagues deserves particular attention: so a range of data is generated which relates to the experience of volunteers and their colleagues, as expressed in their accounts in

interviews, questionnaires, and as observed in the field. Through this study some of the learning opportunities for volunteers and colleagues are investigated.

If the volunteer placement is worth considering from the point of view of its various participants, its context within the country where the placement is located is also significant. Whilst the key resource for understanding learning in the placement is the experience of volunteers and their local colleagues as they meet and participate together in practice, it is also important to investigate the local and national contexts in which volunteering is set up, in which the placements are situated, and in which they are concluded.

This chapter reports such an investigation. Crucial to the production of a coherent and useful exploration of this context are decisions concerning the relevance of various features. Which elements of context - physical, social, political or economic - are relevant? If we understand volunteering as an intervention, then appropriate initial context questions concern its origins: in other words, what is it that has made volunteering possible originally, and at this time, in the various places where it exists? What is sustaining it into the future? These questions will be explored in this chapter.

Since the key empirical focus of this study is a sample of volunteering placements in Indonesia, the significance and location of volunteering within Indonesia is important for the theoretical understanding of volunteering. It also serves to set the scene of these volunteer placements for the reader who is unfamiliar with Indonesia.

The Indonesian context will be explored after another dimension which is shared by the volunteer placements studied here: that they were each initiated and facilitated by a volunteer agency. The agency context is certainly part of the explanation as to how volunteering came into and continues in existence, for these agencies play a role in finding, to some extent training and supporting the volunteer in a role that agency staff have partially prepared. The degree to which the agency retains some ownership of the placement means that the initial dynamic of the placement is different in kind from the situation of freelance expatriate workers, whose only reference is the relationship between themselves and their employer. As we will see, both volunteers and their colleagues experience the volunteer agency as significant, albeit in very different ways.

## Volunteering agencies

Perhaps the single statement most influential in ushering in the ‘development era’, within which volunteering can be located, was part of Truman's inaugural address as U.S. President on Jan 20, 1949:

> 'More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their food is inadequate, they are victims of disease. Their economic life is primitive and stagnant. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history humanity possesses the knowledge and skill to relieve the suffering of these people... I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits or our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realise their aspirations for a better life.... What we envisage is a program of development based on the concepts of democratic fair dealing.... Greater production is the key to prosperity and

> peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of modern scientific and technical knowledge' (cited in Escobar 1995, p.3).

Truman's speech implied that the countries of the South lacked what the North could provide, particularly expertise and technical knowledge; it gave meaning to a new expression, 'underdevelopment'. The implications of underdevelopment were widespread, partly because the concept was accepted across the political spectrum, whilst arguments focused not on the concept, but on its causes (Esteva 1992, p.11).

Within the volunteering movement, an alternative historical starting point would be the World University Service Assembly in India in 1950, where 'a young Indonesian proposed that young skilled people from the West would be of value in the development of his country, if they were interested in living and working with Indonesians on an equal basis' (Bird 1998, p.14). Here was an attractively pragmatic and human response to the then widely accepted problem of underdevelopment, and as such it appealed especially to young people. Australia was one of the first countries to respond:

> 'The notion of people from western countries volunteering to work in developing communities first arose at a World University Assembly held in India in 1951. Back home, in Australia, there was immediate and strong enthusiasm for the idea, and Australians were among the first to respond to the call… Since the founding of Australian Volunteers Abroad in 1964, the program has placed more than 4,000 Australian volunteers for work in nearly 50 countries around the world in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Pacific' (http://www.osb.org.au/ downloaded 21/12/99).

In the UK, the largest of the volunteer agencies is VSO, founded in 1958:

> 'Voluntary Service Overseas is a charity that sends aid to developing countries - not in the form of money, food, clothing or equipment, but in the form of expert volunteers….' (download http://www.vso.org.uk/ 4/10/99).

VSO's origins can be traced back to yet another starting point: the international workcamps in Europe after the wars. VSO's founder Alec Dickson was one of those organising help for Hungarian refugees fleeing across the Austrian border in 1956 (Bird 1998).

> 'Asked by the British Council of Churches to help during the 1956 Hungarian uprising, Dickson observed the impact of western students in refugee relief. In 1957 he visited Sarawak, where his brother Murray was director of education. He had seen how much valuable work could be done by untrained youngsters. The idea for VSO was born. Neither the government or voluntary sector were enthusiastic. Eighteen-year-olds had nothing to offer but their pimples, sniffed one critic, and others said the developing world would not thank Britain for untrained teenagers. But a letter from the Bishop of Portsmouth - actually written by Dickson - to the Sunday Times asking for school leaver recruits to work overseas aroused great interest. In September 1958 the first 12 volunteers went to Sarawak, to Ghana and to Cameroon' (Mackie, L., Alec Dickson's obituary, The Guardian, 24.09.92, p.32).

VSO was guided by Dickson's vision of the mutual benefit to volunteers and people in ex-colonies, and facilitated by his manipulation of contacts in Borneo, Ghana and the UK. Tensions emerged in 1960/61 over the optimum age of volunteers, as VSO sought to define its primary purpose; was this the development of the young volunteer or to assist the process of change in developing countries? (Bird 1998, p.36). The organisation has gone through significant changes since then,

adapting to the competitive pressure of the formation of the Peace Corps by J.F.Kennedy in 1961, as well as to the need to redefine itself to include regions of the ex-Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc at the beginning of this decade. But the early tension over purpose has persisted. An external evaluation in 1997 found that 'people in VSO interpret the mission statement in different ways: some emphasise the development aspect.. others express the view that the volunteering concept is central… we recognise that this debate has raged within VSO for many years…' (Compass 1997, p.48). This internal debate does have some positive aspects, demonstrating members' commitment to the organisation and their engagement with its purpose.

Notwithstanding this conflict over the primary goal, the organisation has been active over the past forty years, and become embedded as an important element of UK structures of international aid. Although an autonomous, non-governmental organisation (NGO), VSO, along with several smaller volunteer agencies, receives over 75% of its operating funds from the UK Department for International Development (DfID):

> 'Through the Volunteer Programme, DfID supports four agencies which send skilled and qualified volunteers to undertake long term assignments for the benefit of poor people in developing countries. DfID's support for the programme in 1997/98 was £23.9 million, which helped to send more than 2,000 volunteers to 80 countries' (DfID, 1999 section 5.7)

Total DfID expenditure on the volunteer programme in 1998/99 was about 1% of the UK budget expenditure for international development programmes (figures from http://www.dfid.gov.uk/public/what/pdf/pt3.pdf). As a comparison, 'Joint Funding' of development and disaster relief projects through Oxfam, Save the Children, Christian Aid, CAFOD, WWF and others accounted for about 1.5% of budget expenditure.

Given this history of volunteering and the continuing relationship between volunteer agencies and government development agendas, it is unsurprising that volunteer agencies position themselves carefully in terms of the expectations of diverse stakeholders. Since the 1997 DfID White Paper on international development, a sharper focus on 'poverty alleviation' has become essential to stay in line with government policy and maintain funding levels (Compass 1997, p.48). The introduction to the VSO website in 1999 illustrates the tensions involved in this positioning. 'Expert volunteers' are:

> '… the right people with the right skills who are committed to ensuring lasting, sustainable improvements where they are most needed. VSO volunteers are recruited from around the world, and all are dedicated to sharing skills and building the capabilities of those with whom they work. VSO currently has 1800 qualified and experienced volunteers in about half of the world's poorest countries and a dozen of the transition economies of Eastern Europe. VSO responds to requests from overseas partners in Asia, Africa, Pacific Islands and Eastern Europe and Russia, and aims to promote international understanding and a more equitable world. Volunteers work closely with local communities in order to pass on experience and skills that are not available locally. Since its founding in 1958 VSO has placed over 27,000 volunteers overseas and there are now 75 local groups in the UK. All of these activities are carried out within the context of the VSO values' (download http://www.vso.org.uk/ 4/10/99).

Commitment is not sufficient: volunteering requires the 'right people with the right skills who are committed'. The headline numbers of volunteers (currently 1800; 27,000 in total since 1958) and

the wide but focused spread (‘half the world’s poorest countries’) demonstrate that this agency makes a serious contribution to development. The appeal to the individual who is considering becoming a volunteer is to their values of ‘dedication’ and ‘commitment’, their desire for ‘sharing’, ‘building’ and ‘a more equitable world’, put into practice somewhere in the very much wider world (in Asia, Africa, the Pacific Islands). Recruitment from 'all around the world' disingenuously appeases those who charge VSO with neo-colonialism, for the great majority of volunteers are from the UK, with some recruitment in Canada and the Netherlands.

For expanding networks of people in the UK, VSO is now recognised as a tried-and-tested mechanism for personal involvement with people in the poorer countries of the world; volunteering is taking on the permanence of a tradition. There is important feedback through the substantial proportion of the many ‘returned volunteers’ who stay involved, helping to train new volunteers, spreading the public profile of volunteering through speaking engagements, campaigning in the name of VSO on relevant issues such as fair trade. Volunteering organisations and these returned volunteers talk of the mutual benefit obtained through the interaction of skilled professionals from the UK, Australia, etc, with professionals, institutions and organisations in countries which like Indonesia have problems meeting basic needs of all citizens. The continuing existence and expansion of the volunteering agencies stand as market testimony to the truth of this claim. There is a strong volunteer support base for VSO, clearly demonstrated in the public arena through reactions to fluctuations in volunteer recruitment. Early in 1998 it was announced that

> 'Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) yesterday recorded a 22 per cent drop in the number of people applying to help developing nations' (The Guardian; 27/02/98 p.19).

Many letters of response to the press gave strong support for VSO, pointed to the drop in domestic volunteering and located the problem in the job market in the UK rather than in any change in attitude towards volunteering. The number of applications has now risen again to record levels (The Guardian; 04/09/2000).

This consideration of recruitment is a reminder that volunteering only exists because there is a constant stream of people who are attracted towards the opportunity. Most newcomers to volunteering are people without personal experience of development or developing countries; 68% of returned volunteers in a recent survey had not worked abroad before (Crossbow Research Ltd, 1998). For most prospective volunteers, information about their future colleagues and the context of their future work is based on television, where the developing world is frequently constructed as an exotic unknown, just as the Orient was constructed in the West in the last century (Said, 1995). Volunteering benefits from an exotic allure which volunteer recruitment campaigns have not neglected over the years.

Real and perceived difference play multiple roles in the structuring of volunteering; difference is part of its justification, while at the same time exciting the interest of individuals who take up the opportunity. The majority of the 1450 returned volunteers responding to the 1998 survey (Crossbow Research Ltd, 1998) agreed with the statements ‘I felt that the experience would be personally satisfying’ (94%), ‘I was interested in and enjoy learning about a new culture’ (93%),

and ‘I enjoyed travelling, I wanted to see the world’ (79%). These were the three statements (from the fifteen offered) which attracted most positive responses. For comparison, 60% strongly agreed or agreed that they ‘wanted to learn more, first hand, about development issues’ and 48% that they were ‘seeking a more rewarding job’. These findings are not necessarily a guide to volunteers' felt experience; our accounts of motivation depend significantly on conditions at the time of forming the account. Moreover, respondents were reporting on their initial motivation having completed their placement up to several years earlier. The data does however indicate the statements which were acceptable to those volunteers in terms of their self-understanding.

Given the absence of information on the South, the image of volunteering is important. It must be seen to be sufficiently challenging and adventurous that it is interesting and gets talked about, without being so threatening that the supply of volunteers is restricted through perceived risk. There is some assurance for prospective volunteers and their families and friends in the absence in the media of bad news concerning volunteers. Stories concerning volunteers who are injured or kidnapped etc are extremely rare, although prominent when they do occur:

> 'Passionate teacher who was doing something special'… 'At least 20 people, including a British aid worker, were killed yesterday when an armed gang ambushed a bus… in broad daylight 30 miles northwest of Bujumbura… The Briton who died was named as Charlotte Wilson, 27… a primary school teacher who went to Rwanda on behalf of Voluntary Service Overseas to work in a local school… an exceptional volunteer - very bright, caring and committed to rebuilding Rwanda's education system… ' (The Guardian, 30/12/2000)

There was a follow-up story in the Guardian on 2/1/2001. An article on June 27, 2001 focuses on what can be done to improve safety for aid workers generally, based partly on an interview with a VSO officer in London, who admitted that 'we don't do enough on security' whilst also pointing out that the charity was working with 'Register of Engineers for Disaster Relief' to review its safety and security strategies.

The emphasis throughout VSO on the health and safety of volunteers is general, encompassing everything from withdrawal from unstable regions to comprehensive motorcycle training courses. VSO's publicity material strikes a balance between attracting new volunteers and making them aware of what is involved, through a mixture of personal accounts, answers to commonly asked questions, pictures and explanations. In this explanation of VSO's role in relation to the individual volunteer, the appeal to tradition and experience is once again obvious:

> 'We have always responded to the changing needs of our volunteers, understanding their aspirations and managing their expectations. We take our responsibilities to our volunteers very seriously. Great care is taken to make sure we recruit the right people - after all, VSO is not for everyone. We give each volunteer the support they need to go overseas. There are programme staff in most countries where we work… who can help with problems. This support continues when volunteers return home, ensuring the transition is as smooth as possible, offering a resettlement programme and providing some assistance in finding employment' (download http://www.vso.org.uk/ 4/10/99).

In one sense at least, it is the investment (of time, energy, care and resources) and management of the reality of volunteering that sustains it. The agency is at the heart of this energetic enterprise; it is important to raise again the issue of the underlying *strangeness* of volunteering. The decision to

go halfway around the world to work with unknown people with less material resources for a couple of years is never a spontaneous act. Seen in this way, volunteering is a managed social world that requires judicious investment of time and resources: not, as with commercial activities, to beat the competition, or as with scientific research, (Clarke 1997) to generate some evasive truth; but in order to exist at all.

The effort and energy to develop, manage and publicise the concept of volunteering effectively normalises the endeavour to the extent that the decision to participate is relatively easy. Volunteering organisations do not only make it financially feasible and administratively efficient; they also provide a route to the decision that is more straightforward for having been trodden by many others. Importantly, the vast majority of those others have come back alive and apparently unharmed; this connects with the management of risk above. The initials ‘VSO’ have come to stand not only for the organisation, but for the volunteer in person: they 'become VSOs’ or decide to ‘do VSO’, explaining their strange decision to themselves, family, friends and colleagues with respect to a relatively well-known institution. This is apparent in the interview data already quoted, and it is very common. These normalising consequences of the organisation are largely unintended, but have evolved into an effective feature of practice.

But whilst volunteering has this coherent image to which all participants can relate, and on which they can work, it is also a richly diverse social world, with many different professions contributing to it. Volunteering agencies nowadays accept relatively few graduates without professional experience. Volunteers have a certain level of technical mastery (although this may not be in the form of discursive knowledge, which may have implications for their training abilities (Schon, 1983)) but this technical ability is associated with their participation in a network of relationships. Science teachers, for example, come with a knowledge of science, but also with experience in schools in their home country, experience of acting within a network including head of department, lab technicians, in the production of a repetoire of activities including classroom organisation, health and safety skills, etc. In addition they are participants in a discourse about the practice of teaching which includes principles of organisation, ways to manage the tension between health and safety requirements and the need for interesting and stimulating activities, and so on. The day-to-day experience of this network of relationships and compromise forms their identity as science teachers, and they are part of an ambitious endeavour; their practice is a 'coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative activity with internal goods which are realised in the attempt to achieve excellence’ (MacIntyre, 1984 p.187).

This range of professional experience among volunteers contributes to the health of the organisation, generating a rich chemistry of energy, opinion, and dialogue. The volunteering community is constantly stimulated by the need to be explicit about professional issues; the discourse of volunteering is interwoven with issues relating to education, nutrition, agriculture, medicine, business and so on. The processes of selecting and training prospective volunteering professionals, matching them to placements, and facilitating those placements in the host countries are learning experiences not only for the volunteers. There is a continuous challenge from the

professions to the agency staff to keep up with developments in their respective fields. Sarah, a volunteer agricultural extension worker who had done some training for VSO since her return from Indonesia exemplifies this challenge:

> 'VSO's training courses are a very important part of its operation… (but) VSO is not at the cutting edge of development thinking. On one of the courses on which Sarah has been a trainer, a session outline included a history of the change from 'rapid rural appraisal' to 'participatory rural appraisal' and then to 'participatory learning and action', instead of just getting on with the training in the latest methodology. Those running the course still saw this as essential background even when challenged by Sarah' [fieldnotes, M11:8 ].

Participants in VSO's routine and quite extensive residential training in a large house in Birmingham nevertheless suggest that it is significant in the developmet of volunteer identity. In one of the three or four training weekends that most volunteers attend just prior to departure, volunteers are brought together as a diverse cross-section of professions to consider issues relating to change, development and difference. Shared concepts such as ‘sustainability’ and ‘development’ become badges of communal membership. The pre-departure period is intensive for most volunteers. The agency maintains fixed departure dates for the sake of efficiency in the host countries, so that finishing work, personal preparation for leaving, professional and other training must be fitted into a few weeks. The training courses become hothouses of volunteer spirit:

> 'Mostly they're excited… because they've made this decision… some of them are just looking forward to it, possible they haven't really thought about the challenges or whatever... Then there's also a group… [including] untrained teachers who are extremely appprehensive... and on training courses what happens is that some of them become extremely insecure and quite aggressive actually… because they're being asked to take on so much…
>
> Those who are confident and secure in themselves and excited just bumble through the course, I'm not sure how much they learn. Or (little laugh) you've got the ones who just play the game… "VSO have put me through this course, I'll do it, tutors are quite good fun, I quite like them but when I get there well I'll just do my own thing"…
>
> You get all these inappropriate relationships being formed… people who are in the same boat, like-minded, together for a week, insecure.. And there've been occasions when we've had to pick up the pieces from that when those relationships have ended … within the week' [returned volunteer, sierral:78]

This is a description of an intimate and intense group, looking ahead to adventure. International volunteering in the UK is seen to depend on a striking number of interlinked processes: careful management by an agency; the experience of training; the discourse of development; the experience of returned volunteers; an information deficit in UK society about people and conditions in the developing world; desire for change and fascination with the exotic, and a continuing dialogue at various levels with the professions that are represented. All this before the volunteers reach the steps of a plane.

## The Indonesian context

Most volunteers come from countries with relatively stable economies and political systems in which there is a strong tradition of free speech, an open political process, a highly structured and national system for minimising the worst material effects of poverty and deprivation; where

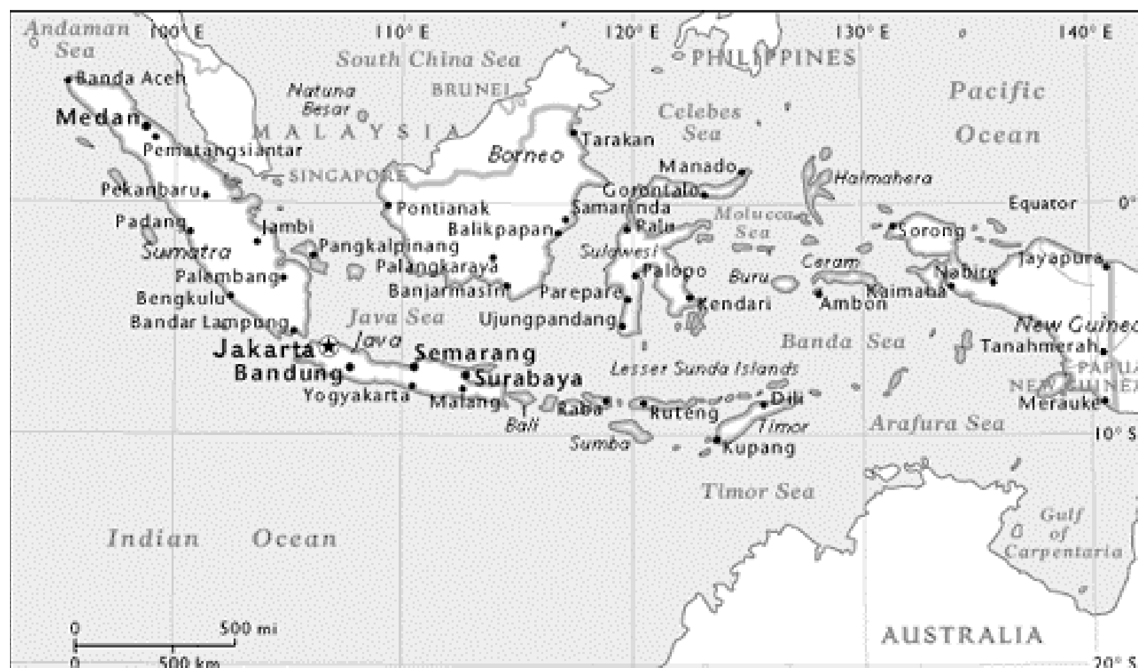
healthcare and education up to the age of eighteen are widely accessible; in which differences based on sex, ethnicity or disability are not legally allowed to determine opportunities at work, treatment by the criminal justice system, access to community facilities or the availability of welfare services, and where the scrutiny of such systems and laws is legitimately the domain of a free and vigorous press. These are also countries where it is accepted that many old people will be lonely and on the edge of mainstream society, an example of a set of priorities regarding security, individual aspiration and concern for others. In almost all these respects, the volunteer's understanding of their country of residence differs from their perceptions of the country in which they will be working.

The form of volunteering with which we are concerned here is conceptualised in the West, but must be enacted in relation to that which is familiar in the particular locality of the individual placement. Placements are not formed or enacted in a vacuum; each is situated in a particular context and constructed by particular people. It is easy for those in volunteering to assume that volunteers, agency officials and local employer have established an agreement about the behaviour of the volunteer, about the support expected from various parties for the volunteer; about conditions of work, housing and standard of living, and most importantly about the aims of the placement. Yet there is plenty of room for diverse interpretations in relation to all of these. Placements are regularly established in terms of development concepts such as 'skills transfer' and 'institution-building'; some volunteers are surprised to discover that these concepts appear less important for their hosts than the enhanced status in the locality afforded by a Westerner. Different motivations to engage in this process should be no surprise at all, if the placement is understood within particular historical and social circumstances.

The Indonesian context is a key part of the explanation as to how the volunteering placements studied here come into and continue in existence. Indonesia is one of some sixty countries accepting these international volunteers; as with those other countries, certain aspects of the geography and history Indonesian can furnish some explanation for how volunteering came about, what makes it possible at this time, and what sustains it into the future.

Indonesia is a nation linking the continent of Asia and Australia, consisting of over 13,000 islands located between the Indian and Pacific oceans. The five main islands are Sumatera, Java, Kalimantan, which borders Malaysia, Sulawesi, and Irian Jaya (which borders Papua New Guinea). The Indonesian climate is tropical: hot and humid, with little variation in temperature because of the large area of almost uniformly warm water. In much of western Indonesia there is a dry season from June to September, and a rainy season from December to March; seasons in the east are influenced by the Australian continental air mass. Tropical rain forest is still extensive, although intensive logging continues in Kalimantan and Irian. Indonesia is still home to more than 500 mammal species (200 of which are endemic), 1500 bird species, and 1000 species of reptiles and amphibians. Much of Indonesia is tectonically unstable with some 400 volcanoes, of which 100 are active, and frequent earthquakes.

Figure 1: Map of Indonesia




In human terms, Indonesia is the fourth most populous nation on earth, with a population of over 200 million in 1999. The largest ethnic group is Javanese, representing 45% of the population, but Indonesia encompasses enormous cultural and religious diversity. Whilst 87% of Indonesians profess the Muslim faith, so that the Islamic population of Indonesia is the biggest in the world, the picture is very different in two out of the three provinces in which volunteer placements in this study were located: Nusa Tenggara Timor and the Southern part of Irian Jaya are both predominantly Catholic.

In a country of over 200 million people with a large variation in population density, demographic trends have long constituted powerful forces. The population growth rate has been steady at about 1.7% per annum over the past decade. The national birth control program ('Two is enough!') has had some effect in reducing growth rates, but Indonesia's population is young, and many women will reach their child-bearing years in the first decades of the twenty-first century.

About 70% of the population is located in rural areas, and agriculture still accounts for 55% of the total labour force, with rice dominating production. But pressure on resources has become problematic among the rice-growing peasants of Java and Bali and in cities. In 1980 the islands of Java, Madura, and Bali, which comprised 7% of the nation's land area, were home to 64% of Indonesia's population; the population density thre was over 500 persons per square kilometre, five times that of the most densely populated Outer Islands. These factors have led to enormous migration; the number of all Javanese leaving the island permanently grew by 73% from 1971 to 1980. Some 6% of the population of the other islands was Javanese by 1980, and this trend has continued. Some migration was organised by the controversial government-sponsored

Transmigration Program, which started in 1969. By 1989, some 730,000 families had been relocated by this program, which has continued through the 1990s. Nearly half of these migrants went to Sumatra, particularly its southern provinces. Smaller numbers went to Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Maluku, and Irian Jaya.

Urbanisation has been rapid. There have been cities in Indonesia for thousands of years, but from 1971 to 1990 the percentage of the national population living in urban areas rose from 17% to nearly 31%. The capital Jakarta was home to 11.5 million people in 1990 and to about 15 million in 1999. Industrialisation has proceeded alongside urbanisation; from virtually no industry in 1965, the country was producing steel, aluminium, and cement by late 1970s, and industry contributing 37% of GDP in 1990. Basic industries include cigarette production, forestry products, food processing, metal manufactures, textiles, automotive and transportation manufactures, and various light industries. Over 80% of production is located in Java and Sumatra. The service sector also grew rapidly in the 1980s, employing about 35% of work force in 1989. Meanwhile, the contribution to GDP from oil production is about half what it was in the 1970s, and reserves are falling. Significant reserves of coal, tin, nickel, copper, gold, and bauxite remain, much of it in the contested territory of Irian Jaya. Much export trade is with Japan, the United States, South Korea, and Taiwan, whilst major imports come from Japan, United States and China.

Indonesia is wider than the United States, and transportation and communications are critically important for the economy and quality of life. Maritime inter-island transportation is the mainstay; traditional sailing craft are still widely used but there is increasing motorisation. There are major airports in Jakarta, Denpasar, Medan, Surabaya, and Batam Island; there were 470 airports in total in the early 1990s. Urban transport is dominated by buses, minibuses, and motorcycles rather than private cars; Jakarta's infrastructure struggles to cope with the traffic volume, despite the building of several private toll roads. There are nearly 7000 km of railways, some of which have been modernised with World Bank assistance since late 1980s. Indonesia has two telecommunications satellites, and in 1992 there were 130 earth stations servicing direct dialing among 147 cities, international direct dialing to 147 countries and about 800,000 telephones. Television and radio are dominated by government networks, although private stations have increased especially in Java over the 1990s. Electronic communication is spreading relatively quickly, with easy public access to the internet through main post offices.

Nine years of schooling become mandatory in 1994, and net primary enrolment reached 97% in 1997, with junior secondary enrolment at 70%. There are some 900 institutions of higher education, and as with all institutions of society, their distribution is skewed towards cities in the central islands. The following data on secondary school enrolment ratios is indicative of these differences:

**Table 1: Net Enrolment Ratios (NER) for Secondary Education by Province, 1995** (source: Department of Education and Culture, http://www.pdk.go.id/pdkstat1.htm downloaded Jun 1998)

| Province | Jakarta | East Java | NTB | NTT | Irian Jaya | East Timor | National average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **NER 16-18 yrs** | 43.53 | 25.03 | 25.39 | 21.22 | 24.06 | 20.56 | 27.52 |

As a result of the growth in industrialisation and trade, Indonesia as a whole is neither one of the poorest countries in the world, nor one of the least developed in relation to the human criteria used to calculate the UNDP's Human Development Index:

**Table 2: Human Development Index 1998** (1995 figures unless otherwise stated)

| Country | Life expectancy | Adult literacy | Combined enrolment ratio | Adjusted GDP per capita (US dollars) | HDI value | HDI rank (out of 174 in 1998) | (Real GDP rank) - (HDI rank) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **UK 1995** | 76.8 | 99 | 86 | 6223 | 0.932 | 14 | 7 |
| **Indonesia 1995** | 64 | 83.8 | 62 | 3971 | 0.679 (0.665*) | 96 | -9 |
| **Indonesia 1997** | 65.1 | 85 | 64 | 3490 | 0.681* | 105 | -11 |
| **Sierra Leone 1995** | 34.7 | 31.4 | 30 | 625 | 0.185 | 174 | -3 |

*New formula introduced for 1997 in the 1999 Human Development Report at http://www.undp.org/hdro

**Table 3: Trend in Indonesian Human Development Index**
(http://www.undp.org/hdro/Backmatter1.pdf)

| Year | 1960 | 1970 | 1980 | 1990 | 1997 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Indonesia** | 0.223 | 0.306 | 0.418 | 0.586 | 0.681 |

The figures in Table 3 suggest that human development continued in Indonesia until 1997. Prior to that year, the annual average growth rate of GDP was around 5% over the decade. However, foreign loans, largely from Japan, World Bank and Asian Development Bank have long been fundamental to government financing, accounting for around 17% of government income in 1992, while debt servicing accounted for 28% of central government expenditure. There had been indications for some time that the economy of the country was not well-positioned to face the Asian downturn of the mid-1990s. Analysts associated this economic fragility with the state of the political system.

The Indonesian political system has a complex task to achieve. The national motto, 'Unity in Diversity', marks the most critical and problematic aspiration for a country of extremes in almost

every dimension of human experience. The nation is just over fifty years old. Independence was declared at the end of World War II, after a brief occupation by the Japanese. A war with the Dutch followed which continued through five years of negotiation, until the new Republic was formed in 1950; at that time the country did not include Irian Jaya or East Timor. Sukarno, the first President of Indonesia, had been an activist for independence under the Dutch in the 1930s, and under the Japanese in the 1940s. An intensely charismatic figure on the domestic and world stage, Sukarno maintained power by moving the young democratic state towards dictatorship, by expansionism and by courting relationships with the U.S., Soviet Union and China. But by 1964, the economy was in terrible shape, with food and clothing shortages of food and clothing and inflation of 700%. A coup d'etat in the following year ousted Sukarno and brought General Suharto to power; hundreds of thousands of people were killed in anti-communist violence in the following year. Suharto's long presidency was marked by economic growth, enforced consensus and controlled political development; restrictions placed on political parties ensured that the government could not be changed through the electoral system.

It was economic crisis which precipitated the fall of President Suharto in May 1998[4], ending his 32 year reign and releasing long restrained pressure for political and social change. Capital drained out the country as the rupiah fell by some 80%, and inflation rose to 70%, while output contracted by at least 13%. Triggered by the Southeast Asian financial crisis in July 1997, the economic crisis has resulted in negative growth, increased poverty, increased unemployment and decreased investment. The Indonesian rupiah began the decade at just under Rp. 2000 to the dollar. By 1993 it was down to Rp. 3500, gradually declining until the collapse in 1997 when for a time the rate was more than Rp. 16,000 to the dollar. By 1999 it had stabilised at about Rp7000 (information from Tempo Interactive downloaded from http://www.tempo.co.id/ on 28/12/99). The banking and financial sector has been devastated and the industrial sector, along with international business confidence, has been badly damaged. Tens of thousands of Indonesians of Chinese descent (the backbone of the financial & industrial sectors) have left the country, traumatised by their victimisation during the riots of May 1998. The effects of this crisis are visible in practice, but not yet in annual statistics. In 1997 most large aid agencies and some international NGOs were planning to scale down or close their programmes in Indonesia. This trend has now been reversed, with a substantial increase in bi-lateral, multi-lateral and international NGO assistance, most of which has been directed at emergency relief to address increased poverty and unemployment, rather than longer term development needs.

The ruling party, Golkar, lost the election to the Democratic Party for Struggle (PDI-P) in the summer of 1999. East Timor became independent in August 1999 provoking dismay and ruthless hostility from the military, after which President Gus Dur (Abdurachman Wahid) was elected in

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[4] The source of much of the data within the description that follows is the excellent Library of Congress Country Profile of Indonesia (at http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/idtoc.html, downloaded 23/12/99). Other material is drawn from a summary of the current political situation by the VSO programme director (Sane, 1999) or from the author's own knowledge.

October 1999 as a unity president with respect from all sides. The early months of 2000 were marked by increasing religious tensions in Maluku and most recently in NTB, one of the areas where fieldwork was carried out. In the summer of 2001, parliament voted to impeach and then to oust Wahid and instate the popular Megawati Sukarnoputri, Sukarno's daughter, to widespread public approval.

International volunteers have been working in Indonesia for most of this history.

### An Indonesian perspective on the development of the nation

I want to turn now to a more specifically Indonesian perspective of the growth and development of the nation; here the history of language in Indonesia is particularly useful, and helps to understand the conditions under which volunteering exists from an Indonesian point of view.

The movement for Indonesian independence grew early this century, after some seventy years of concerted aggression by the Dutch attempting to take control of the whole of the archipelago to which they had laid claim. In 1928 and as part of the struggle for independence, the adoption of Bahasa Indonesia from one variant of the Malay language (Heryanto 1995, p.39). was pronounced by nationalists to be one of the principal identifying characteristics of being Indonesian. Since then, Indonesian has become the 'lingua franca' of state and of communication by the majority of the population outside their locality, although the greatest part of the population also speak one of several hundred mother tongues. The ‘nation-building’ of the Sukarno era (from pre-Independence before 1945 until 1965) utilised language as an important tool to develop a national identity, providing a medium in which the national characteristics and ideology (‘Pancasila’) could be developed, communicated and internalised. Forming an Indonesian language, rather than using that of former colonisers, has proved easier than pursuing a unique Indonesian development in other respects. It has been argued that Indonesian is inherently a language of development:

> 'Bahasa Indonesia is a product of language planning, engineering, and Development programs par excellence. It does not evolve from communal activities in the ordinary lives of its speakers. It has not been a mother tongue to anyone' (Heryanto 1995, p.5).

The Suharto regime (1965-98) was predicated largely on national development in the Western mode, through industrialisation and participation in global trade, defining itself in opposition to the Sukarno era (Holt, 1972; Chalmers and Hadiz, 1997). The Indonesian discourse of development became interpenetrated with the concepts of Western technical progress; most of the 'technocrats' that drove the national economic plans of the 60's and 70's were elite students returned from Harvard, the fruit of the New Order relationship with Washington.

> ‘It would be an understatement to say that the Indonesian word for ‘Development’, *Pembangunan*, is important and widely disseminated… all (six) cabinets under the New Order government have been called *Kabinet Pembangunan* (Heryanto 1995, p.8)

Thirty years of sustained economic growth and poverty reduction legitimated this 'benevolent dictatorship', despite ‘a great deal of criticism from those who consider that *Pembangunan* has caused various undesirable effects in non-economic realms of the society’ (ibid. p.18); but when the economy collapsed, the regime fell. Throughout that time, Indonesian national identity has

been extended through development activities, influencing the way that development is understood across the archipelago, by Indonesian teachers, nurses, doctors, NGO workers: the colleagues with whom volunteers work. This conceptualisation of development is accentuated by new words added to the language:

> ‘Many new words are technocratic in the sense that they are typically derived from what initially belongs exclusively to the professionals and bureaucrats involved in wide-ranging Development projects ... Some notable examples include *rekayasa* 'engineering'; *usulan* 'proposal'; *lesan* 'aim' or 'target'; *teba* 'scope'; *masukan* 'input'' (ibid. p.41)

as well as impact, obstacle, transfer, partner or counterpart, interaction, standardised, random, monitor; this is an

> 'influx of new words which at first seem Indonesian, but cannot be understood.. The mass media have played an extremely important role in the rapid dissemination of these new words’ (ibid. p.41).

It has been argued that because of the kind of internalisation of capitalist value systems explored here, ‘domination of the South by the north is a more enduring process that formal colonial rule' (Gledhill 1994, p70). Volunteers could be seen as part of this new rhetorical colonialism. But 'an emphasis on Western domination and global processes of transformation can obscure indigenous resistances to domination' (ibid. p70). Resistance can be located at the level of the state: in Indonesia, people's understanding of development relates also to the state ideology, *Pancasila*: the ‘Five Principles’, summarised as belief in one God, humanism, nationalism, democracy and social justice. Pancasila is a powerful influence in society: ‘All civil servants [including teachers and health workers], urban citizens, and students from primary up through tertiary school systems are required to attend… indoctrination sessions. Development programs have the character of being ‘international’ … substantially inseparable from the dynamics of global industrialisation. In contrast, *Pancasila* is relatively nationalistic and ostensibly ‘authentic’ (ibid. p.20-21). Volunteer programmes and volunteers that do not take account of specifically Indonesian understanding such as that embedded in Pancasila are likely to face strong resistance and be relatively ineffective.

Unsurprisingly in a nation of complex diversity, both *Pembangunan* and *Pancasila* often assume a greater rhetorical value than is reflected in terms of relationships and practice. One consequence of the linking of national identity with development is that regional improvement became a way for regional leadership to demonstrate solidarity with the national programme. In the provinces especially, geographically remote from the centre, it became tempting to allow rhetoric to outstrip the developmental reality. 'Development' in those regions became in the public perception more a matter of slogans than of substance; national data relating to education, health and agriculture suggested a much greater equality with the centre than in fact existed. It is into this gap that an energetic non-government sector has grown, drawing on both local and international sources; volunteer agencies are seen as partners in this NGO field.

In the operation of the development program, Indonesia's polycultural character becomes very significant. As one NGO leader commented during my fieldwork,

> '... even Javanese coming here… find that they need six months to get to understand the culture' [T6:45].

Java's strong, ancient cultural identity and relatively developed society and infrastructure identify the Javanese to themselves at the top of the Indonesian cultural and social orders. Most of the new words mentioned earlier 'are derived from the archaic and aristocratic Javanese language' (Heryanto 1995, p.45). Within Java the situation is more complicated; but Javanese travellers take a strong and positive cultural identity with them across the archipelago. This is sometimes problematic, as was evident to me in a transmigration site in Irian:

> 'the headteacher is implementing his vision of a good school and the Javanese students are ready to respond… He actively seeks backing from the community and is able to get it. He is well supported by the government with the initiatives he starts. The overall impression one has visiting this school is that they are creating a little piece of Java in Irian, and they are driven by this idea and pride. I felt unhappy there; there was a racist atmosphere and they were getting results by exploiting it' [i11PSW:101].

Within Indonesia, international volunteering has seen itself as a response to the extremes of poverty in some areas produced by uneven development across the country, and more recently in terms of response to the economic crisis. The following comes from the 'background to the VSO programme' in the VSO Indonesia country profile (http://www.vso.org.uk/explore/cprofiles/indonsia.htm downloaded 29/12/99):

> 'Following the resignation of President Suharto in April 1998 after ruling for over 30 years, Indonesia is experiencing unprecedented change. The Asian economic turmoil in mid-1998 which brought down Suharto has devastated the Indonesian economy... The atmosphere of greater political freedom has been widely welcomed, but sudden unemployment has brought misery to many whose lives had improved during the years of growth. Meanwhile the many marginalised groups and geographical areas ‘left behind’ in the general economic prosperity wait to see if the new government will make any major social improvements. With over 20 million people living below the poverty line, the government stresses the importance of poverty alleviation and although great progress has been made in this area, it is generally agreed that further reductions will be difficult since Indonesia is dealing with ‘hard core’ poverty'.

In this first chapter I introduced a general question, 'What is going on in volunteering' and suggested that the most significant answer to this question will come through a thorough engagement with participant perpectives. I have explored the origins and maintenance of volunteering in the UK, and the very different Indonesian context in which the placements studied in this thesis are located. In the next chapter I investigate what happens as volunteers make the transition from one context to the latter.

## Chapter Two: Volunteering in Indonesia

What possible contribution can volunteers make in the context outlined in the previous chapter? In this chapter, From the perspective of the Indonesian government, a volunteer programme such as VSO's is correctly 'perceived to be a small fish in the ocean of Indonesian development and one which brings no money to the country' (VSO Indonesia, 1999). If volunteering is to be justified in terms of local effects, then it is right to explore what happens when Western approaches to science teaching or to laboratory science in hospitals are developed in such a context. In the established traditions of a UK or Australian volunteering institution, skilled professionals from very different countries can work together for their mutual benefit and that of their respective communities. The transformation and problematisation of this relatively simple idea as it becomes subject to the complex reality of Indonesia is the subject of investigation in this chapter.

The discontinuity between Northern and Southern contexts becomes real as one focuses on individual volunteers journeying from their home country. Their relationship with the volunteer agency goes through several structural shifts, something partially recognised by the agency in a booklet which 'addresses the problem of false expectation':

> 'Before their departure overseas, volunteers' expectations are refined by VSO, by volunteers who have returned and hopefully, by background reading. At this stage, the volunteer identifies strongly with VSO and the 'bonding' process continues throughout the short period of training overseas. But this preparatory and training role suddenly ceases once the volunteer switches allegiance to a new employer… ' (Graham 1990, pp.17-18).

What is required is a set of concepts that will facilitate explicit consideration of this radical change in context. I want to establish in this chapter some sense of the complex set of tensions built into the structure and process of volunteering, for this has profound and surprising consequences for participants' learning. One possible theoretical framework is provided by social worlds theory, which developed out of the Chicago school of interactionist sociology.

### A social worlds perspective

Much of the exploration of context in this chapter has been guided by an attempt to problematise the existence of volunteering as an activity, in these particular times and places. Initial questions included 'What is it that has made volunteering possible originally, and at this time, in the various places where it exists?' and 'What is sustaining it into the future?' Such a relationship between context and issue implies an approach using 'sensitising concepts… suggestive ideas about what might be potentially fruitful to examine and consider' (Clarke 1997, p.65). This is part of a grounded theoretical approach; sensitising concepts are not fully developed definitive categorising devices, but concepts that are themselves developed in the process of exploring and referring to contextualised empirical data. What is important is 'whether (the theory) helps in the process of discovery, opens analytical doors, and provides entrée into chaotic data and a useful analytical framework. If it does so, the theory will continue to be built and refined on firm theoretical foundations' (ibid. p.85).

In the attempt to unscramble the conditions under which volunteering exists, social worlds theory suggests a useful set of sensitising concepts. The social worlds perspective takes as units of analysis various segments of society which are less well defined than institutions, but more coherent than networks. The concept has developed over forty years; Clarke (1997), paraphrasing Strauss, defines social worlds as ‘groups with shared commitments to certain activities sharing resources of many kinds to achieve their goals’ (p.68).

Social worlds theory is a development in the symbolic interactionist tradition, for people who continually make and refine meanings in their interactions, are seen to emerge as groups of people with shared sets of meanings and commitments. With such groups as the unit of analysis, a whole set of questions are suggested which revolve around the 'work' that the group does. Included in this work are 'very important activities within all social worlds … establishing and maintaining *boundaries* between worlds and gaining social *legitimacy* for the world itself' (Clarke 1997, p70).

Part of the utility of viewing volunteering as a social world is that this provokes the question of the continued existence of volunteering and the mechanisms by which volunteering maintains its legitimacy, in a context which is seen to include many other social worlds. One way of interpreting the foregoing description of volunteering in the UK is to note that volunteering does not exist primarily as an institution, the volunteer agency, but as a group of people with more or less shared commitments. This group includes amongst others agency staff, returned volunteers who decide to remain involved, DfID officers predisposed to see the value of volunteering and provide some financial shelter, and prospective volunteers entrusting themselves to the tradition and activities of the group. Then many of those people are seen to be simultaneously members of other social worlds, such as the professions in which volunteers participate, each with their own tradition and discourse of practice. These professions were noted as having a role in informing the practice of volunteering.

By focusing on 'groups with shared commitments', social worlds theory holds together the ideal and the practical. Under consideration is the relationship between a particular commitment (in the case of volunteering, relating to development, equity, justice) and the practical base of that commitment located within the lives and careers of the individual members (for volunteers, this relates to opportunity, challenge, and security). Both the nature of the commitment and its actual source in the biography and sociology of the group are in focus.

Some theorists have categorised social worlds according to the nature of the commitment which holds them together. Volunteering can seen to be primarily a *social movement* (Clarke 1997, p.69) where activities 'focus on shared commitments to alter the larger world in which they are embedded' (ibid. p.69), rather than a *production* world, for volunteering has no well defined products. It is through a focus on change that volunteering continues to attract new membership and continuing funding, without which it could not continue to exist.

## The social world of volunteering in Indonesia

In the experience of every volunteer, the world of volunteering is dramatically intersected by their encounter with Indonesian people and institutions of other social worlds: primary education, the NGO community, the environmental lobby, nursing and so on, depending on the job involved. All these institutions are formed in relation to the wider political, social and economic context outlined earlier, which means that they are not immediately accessible to the volunteer's understanding. Although they may share a job title such as science teacher, volunteer colleagues are rooted in a very different practice. Indonesian teachers for instance have a repetoire of interactions and rationality for classroom behaviour, attitudes to students, reasonable expectations, skills in the use of the available resources, knowledge of the students' hopes and expectations of education, and they participate in a situated discourse about this practice just as the volunteer did in his or her home country.

Colleagues are located outside the world of volunteering, but within other social worlds such as Indonesian education, where they share commitment to, for instance, the maintenance of the social order and of school practice in particular. Volunteers can be seen as lacking the particular commitment that defines participation in the social worlds of their colleagues, as suggested by Pak[5] Stef talking about the volunteer English teacher he had worked with:

> 'As a teacher, she was skilled. Not as a mother, or educator (pendidik) perhaps. But in terms of teaching, marking, testing, preparing thoroughly, yes. An educator takes on another role, giving advice, motivation, trying to communicate and encourage certain values: why English is important… And educators would for instance be communicating the message that if you work hard, it means you respect your parents' [WF10: 52-53].

The complexity and sense of each other's practice is initially invisible to volunteer and colleague. In the face of this strangeness and the processes of change that unfold, relationships within the volunteering world have psychological importance to some, perhaps most volunteers at some point:

> 'I need to see someone else's situation which brings me onto things here… I'm no longer in the desperate state that I was but I still worry that things are not how they should be' [letter from volunteer to programme officer, S11:10].

But as they engage and create a successful placement, each volunteer's primary commitment gradually shifts to their new world. Insofar as they participate in this world, volunteering can come to look increasingly irrelevant to their success; they see themselves less as volunteers. This can call into question the norm of continuing commitment to the volunteering world that is so important for the stability, dependability and perceived coherence of the whole volunteering experience. As has been seen, these are qualities upon which the volunteering world in the home country depends: safely returning volunteers who have had a positive experience are an

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[5] 'Pak' is a term of respect in Indonesia, similar to 'Mr', used as a matter of course in addressing men. Women are addressed as 'Ibu'.

enormously important factor for ensuring the supply of prospective volunteers and continuing funding.

Viewed through the concepts of social worlds theory, the meeting of Indonesian and volunteering social worlds requires work on two related fronts for these different social worlds to continue in existence: their legitimacy has to be continuously constructed, and their boundaries to be continually maintained. The Indonesian social worlds of education, health, etc. are more established; they generate reliable commitment from participants. It is the volunteering world that has to work harder: as in the UK, one interpretation of the activities and rhetoric of volunteering in Indonesia is in terms of these two tasks of boundary and legitimacy, which sometimes conflict. Participation by volunteers in institutions is essential for legitimacy of the programme, but the more they participate, the less they feel like 'volunteers'; they move beyond the boundary of volunteering.

In a sense, it is the global nature of the volunteering enterprise which makes it strange to the volunteer in the placement. The agency appears to present the volunteer with a contradiction by using the tools of a dominant elite in pursuing its goals of representing marginalised groups and changing the existing order. Castells (1996) characterises the 'network society' as being '… constructed around flows.. of capital… information… technology… images, sounds, and symbols…' (ibid. p.412):

> 'The fundamental form of domination in our society is based on the organizational capacity of the dominant elite that goes hand in hand with its capacity to disorganize those groups in society which, while constituting a numerical majority, see their interests partially represented… space plays a fundamental role in this mechanism. In short: elites are cosmopolitan, people are local' (Castells 1996, p.415)

Volunteers and colleagues work in institutions which are constructed largely within a local context; volunteer agencies are internally coordinated through flows of information including requests for volunteers, characteristics of professionals thousands of miles away, and reporting and accounting structures which are global in scope. Volunteer agencies have strong connections into centres of power in sending and host countries: government funding departments, other charities, government departments in the fields in which they are engaged, such as education and health. Whilst access to electronic networks is spreading rapidly in Indonesia, Indonesian partner organisations nevertheless have a much weaker range of connections and contacts, because the network society is only partly a 'circuit of electronic impulses'; it also consists of sites of production and exchange of information, and the 'spatial organisation of the dominant, managerial elites' (Castells 1996, pp.412-415).

In the face of this contradiction, agencies have developed strategies which tend to maintain volunteer commitment to the agency. One Australian volunteer agency bolsters its volunteers as 'ambassadors', and provides support through regular tours to volunteer placements, a biannual volunteer conference and long-distance communication with Melbourne. VSO attempts to maintain an active presence throughout the life of the volunteer in Indonesia through the programme office in Jakarta. The staff of this office receive the newly arriving volunteers;

organise the provision of language training; regularly visit volunteers and colleagues in placements; request regular progress reports from volunteers and organise an annual conference for all volunteers in Bali, and arrange the necessary visas and work permits from the Government of Indonesia. They play a crucial role in managing the security of volunteers, whether in terms of policy and training regarding motorbikes on dangerous roads, in the provision of health care, or more exceptionally as in August 1999, where staff decided to arrange temporary evacuation of volunteers from West Timor, on the basis of the increase in perceived threat to Westerners as a result of the referendum result on East Timorese independence. Staff are involved when a placement goes wrong for more personal or local reasons.

An increasingly important role for VSO staff is the strategic development of the Indonesian 'volunteer programme', which entails planning of individual and groups of placements, in the light of political, social and economic changes in the country and in funding policy in the UK; and which builds on more established roles of facilitating and responding to requests for volunteers from Indonesian institutions. One section of the VSO Indonesia Country Strategic Plan 2000-2003 is concerned with 'involving stakeholders', including volunteers, in many of these agency activities:

> 'Maintain level and increase quality of volunteer involvement in in-country briefing [for newly arrived volunteers] by making input more structured… maintain and develop effective volunteer-to-volunteer support networks… actively support volunteer exchange visits… pro-actively cluster volunteers in certain geographical areas and avoid single placements in geographically isolated areas' (VSO Indonesia, 1999).

Maintaining and building a discourse of volunteering within the Indonesian context is an important means of creating coherence and commitment. This typically involves a sense of history, governmental legitimacy, and an appeal to practical effectiveness:

> VSO has been working in Indonesia under the authority of the British Council since 1968 and established a Programme Office in 1978… VSO works with the full agreement of the Government of Indonesia to provide international technical assistance… VSO believes that one of the most effective ways to ensure that real changes result from development activities is through direct practical action, working together with local people to share ways of working, transferring appropriate skills through teaching and training. VSO therefore posts appropriately qualified people from Europe and elsewhere to placements in Indonesia where they live and work with local colleagues. At any one time there are between 50-80 volunteers working in the following areas in Indonesia: education, health, natural resources, technical and business and social development (statement within job description for VSO Indonesia staff, 1999).

VSO Indonesia works hard to maintain a forum for this volunteering discourse despite the restrictions imposed by the wide geographic spread of volunteers, for example publishing a bimonthly contributor publication providing programme news to volunteers and drawing on their experience.

But many volunteers do resist the claims of the agency as they develop in their institution, and in doing so they reflect the balance of their priorities. A volunteer who had been with VSO in Indonesia for many years reflected on her involvement in strategic and practical programme development at the 1998 Annual Volunteer Conference in Bali:

> '… almost two days was input into VSO, to the five year plan... OK, it's good that VSO ask us; we're the people that should know it. But the last day we had workshops on development theory and land rights, now I got much more out of that. I being in Merauke, never meet those kind of people… to me that's much more important than my input to the five year plan. So I consider myself a VSO, but more important are my responsibilities to my NGO' [I1:158-159].

Sometimes the tension gives way to exasperation on both sides, as in this extract from a letter to a volunteer in NTT:

> 'Over the years I've realised that the manner in which you relate to this office is not intended to be as offensive as it often appears, but by your standards you have excelled yourself. I am tempted to point out at some considerable length the extent to which your own successes have been made possible by those you style so dismissively as bureaucrats, but there would be little point.... [volunteer agency programme officer, EL3:96].

Tension can also lead to public confrontation between volunteer and agency over priorities, as when a environmental volunteer Michele chose to miss the annual volunteer conference because of a governmental visit to her institution. Confrontations like this effectively mark out the boundary for other volunteers, such as Sue who uses the incident to discuss the relative strength of her commitment to her institution and to the volunteer agency:

> 'If (the conference) really interfered with my work I think I should say I can't come… because of my work. Now Michele did that, and [the VSO programme director] completely threw a wobbly, and never forgave her. Now that was with ministers coming for the workshop and goodness knows what else, you know. Just saying oh I have to plant coffee isn't an excuse, you know you can put it off for four days. You know you could do it in a week. But my final thing is [the NGO I work for] not VSO. ' [I1:152].

So the boundaries of the social world of volunteering are maintained through the events that bring volunteers together, and through the work of a discourse between volunteers and agency which is fuelled by contradiction. The resulting coherence of the volunteer programme is necessary for the supply of volunteers.

## The legitimation of volunteering through participation

The social world of volunteering appears to be legitimated in different ways on each side of its boundary. VSO programme staff in Indonesia consider a key strength of the programme to be the 'reasonable understanding of VSO and volunteers among NGOs in the main areas we have worked in, with volunteers generally being thought to bring good professional skills and be adaptable to the Indonesian work 'culture' and socio-cultural norms… ' (VSO Indonesia, 1999). Demand for volunteers is certainly generated partly through word-of-mouth: the quality of a placement is news, not only among volunteers and in the agency but among members of institutions in which volunteers work. But Indonesian people often locate the success or failure of a placement in the person of the volunteer, rather than in colleagues or in the organisation. Since the success criteria of volunteer placements are quite difficult to specify, people commonly substitute the characteristics of a volunteer who they consider to have been successful. One Indonesian English teacher had drawn conclusions from working with a volunteer teacher and inservice trainer:

> 'Gareth was large, outgoing, a communicator, alive. In general, volunteers who are alive, and like music and sport, for instance, can quickly be accepted' [colleague, EL4:47].

News about 'good volunteers' is passed around a community, as seen in a conversation in 1998 with a new volunteer about this same teacher, who had been in the same school in Flores ten years earlier, and compared with his successor in physics Tony:

> 'I found myself talking about Gareth, and she said how much they talk about him, 'even in the post office!' [fieldnotes, EL6:53]. She heard that he had married an Indonesian woman, but that sounds more like confusion on someone's part with Tony. She had never heard of Tony' [fieldnotes, EL6:84].

People take news of volunteers with them when they move; I sat next to a woman on a bus in Flores who was soon enthusing about 'Pak Roger'[6], who had been her English teacher in Sumba five years previously. Volunteers create precedents for successors, by establishing patterns of engagement that others perceive to be effective:

> ‘I shall be running my first intensive course for the new semester in Walawaru from the 7th to the 12th August, for Physics teachers in the kabupaten along the lines of Gareth's courses there last year’ [volunteer teacher, EL5:27].

NGO leaders and headteachers in Indonesia talk about volunteers in their networks: in Lombok one manager told me admiringly of a VSO English teacher hundreds of miles away in Kalimantan, who worked with an NGO after hours on advocacy work [Lom4:40]. Thinking perhaps that I worked for the volunteer agency, a headteacher in Flores who had been impressed with a volunteer physics teacher from a distant town made a point of talking to me about applying to have a physics teacher after his current volunteer had finished [EL1:123-126]. Such networking is also apparent in the case studies of Chapter Five.

To most or all participants in the host institution, an anticipated placement is not the start of a new enterprise or project. It is simply the arrival in the institution of another newcomer, albeit one with a different background, language and way of life. The more pressing issue with regard to the volunteer is generally not 'what will the volunteer be able to change around here?' but 'will they fit in?' Adaptation of the volunteer is perhaps even more important to colleagues than it is to volunteers:

> 'To begin with his adaptation was a bit difficult but now he has become like an inhabitant of Labuan Bajo, who has succeeded in adapting to the situation, culture and place' [headteacher's report on volunteer, WF2:20]
>
> 'My school is arranged differently to Ron's previous one, but it didn't take [him] long to fit in here' [headteacher, WF6:85].

In Ruteng, I noted the views of several community development professionals in an Indonesian NGO on a series of 'problem volunteers' in the town, showing how volunteers can assume a high visibility to local people, especially when several placements were located in one town:

> 'Their main theme from the start was, that there was something wrong with the selection of volunteers that seemed to put so many dodgy characters in placements…. Lewis couldn't communicate unless drunk, and that when he was drunk he could be rude: they remembered one occasion in particular when he came to the office, and... they kind of

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[6] Roger became a programme officer in the volunteer agency: he appears in the case studies in Chapter Five.

> shivered at the memory. He would often be completely silent in meetings, not being drunk, and then go completely against their agreed plan in carrying out some work. He was often rude, and didn't last two years. Karin from Sumba was around for a while… but the Women's craft workshop that they wanted to get going didn't happen after two years, and Karin 'ran off with her Indonesian husband'. Sue at the school for the deaf was sick all the time… After a lot of discussions, they had come to the conclusion that VSO was just making bad selections. [fieldnotes, WF5].

From an Indonesian point of view, it is almost always volunteers who are the focus of this news of success or failure. Volunteers, being different in noticeable ways, have a higher visibility than Indonesians; they are literally the most obvious explanation for success or failure of a placement. This is not always the case: the same NGO told of a mysterious failed placement involving a farmer:

> 'They had no doubts that the most successful volunteer that they'd seen was Steph, who they had worked with a bit in farming, livestock development, and who wanted to extend, but *seemingly something happened*: anyway they asked her to carry out some contract work for them, and she would often drop by to discuss things.' [fieldnotes, my italics, WF5:3].

Neither Indonesian colleagues nor volunteers were open about what happened in this placement. Presented as a mystery, it became unnecessary to apportion blame; this group of Indonesian NGO staff were loathe to put the blame for failure on a volunteer whom they knew personally and got on with.

It nevertheless holds as a general rule that colleagues talk about the success of the volunteer, rather than the success of the volunteer placement. Within the data generated through this study, the words 'placement' and 'volunteer' do not occur at all when volunteers and colleagues are talking together within their institutions; whereas they are used extensively in volunteer talk with the agency staff and with the researcher. The word 'volunteer' in Indonesian (sukarelawan) is generally associated with military personnel, and this only adds to the initial misunderstanding as to what volunteers have come for. No volunteers or colleagues in my experience made a connection between 'volunteering' and more indigenous forms of voluntary action, although there is a strong tradition of such action in Indonesia:

> '…volunteering is not a western prerogative… you will find a thriving culture of voluntary action in most countries of the world. …self-help and mutual-exchange groups like gotong royong in Indonesia and bayanihan in the Philippines, abound … Voluntary associations have proliferated all over the world, and under the most diverse political circumstances' (Newbery, 1998)

As has been seen, volunteers as individuals are very visible to their Indonesian colleagues, who certainly judge these volunteers against various criteria. But those criteria rarely concern the volunteer's success at effecting change in the host institution; they are more likely to refer to the ability of the volunteer to participate in the institution and the local community. Colleagues do not make much use of the concept of the placement, and they certainly never equate the placement with the institution. They do not focus on the volunteer when thinking about change in the institution; they are aware of a much wider and longer term set of influences on the institution as a whole.

## The legitimation of volunteering through change

I want to suggest that from the perspective of the volunteer organisation and some volunteers themselves, *change* is the main source of legitimacy for volunteering. They focus on change in the institution which occurs during the period of intervention, and it is the volunteer who features most strongly in their understanding of that change. Such a focus is well-suited to the efficient planning, monitoring and evaluation of a volunteer programme, since the volunteer is the one fixed element in all volunteer placements. The unintended consequence is an increasingly volunteer-centric conception of the placement.

Whilst one section of volunteer agencies is refining the selection processes for prospective volunteers, another section is giving attention to the setting up of placements. After a meeting between the host institution and an officer of the volunteer agency, a placement description is produced, which is an attempt to define the envisaged role of the volunteer in the institution. The placement description is an important document; mediating between the institution, agency staff and the prospective volunteer prior to and during the placement. Constructing this description is a process which entails the formulation of a set of agreed activities, the identification of a group of colleagues with reasonable expectations and some understanding of personal implications, and an agreement with authorities in the community. It is a process which requires, from the volunteer agency's point of view, all the skills and understanding of the 'experienced programme staff, all with … an average of over eight years working in Indonesia, fluent Indonesian and above average knowledge of the country' (VSO Indonesia, 1999). I suggest that the placement description is an attempt to frame the contribution that the volunteer will make, which is inevitably conceived in terms of change.

This perspective has strange consequences, in that change in the host institution in the period between the formulation of the placement and the arrival of the volunteer is experienced as a problem. Volunteer frustration and disappointment caused by such changes have led to a standard disclaimer at the foot of each page of a placement description: ‘This information was accurate at the time of completion but circumstances may have changed’ (VSO placement description form, 1995). It is as if only changes related to the volunteer are legitimate.

The focus of all sections of these forms, including the sketches of the history of the host organisation, is the placement as it will appear to the volunteer. Perhaps because they constitute the most formal source of information about the organisation, these placement descriptions and all the discussions they engender can have the unintended consequence of making the placement more real to the volunteer than it will ever be to his or her colleagues. Colleagues are more likely to fit the volunteer to their perceived needs:

> 'The boss had very clear ideas about what the placement was. What the staff thought it was, was quite different. When I arrived, I got out of the minibus… they said, 'Oh good, here's the new English teacher' …. it was written at the very bottom of the placement description 'help with English'…
>
> I checked very thoroughly in London beforehand that this was not English teaching, it was like helping people with writing reports or whatever… the last thing I wanted to do was

> teach English, so that was a bit of a shock. The difference between the expectations of the boss and the expectations of the staff was very marked. I think that's quite common…' [volunteer, jak2:25-28].

Few institutions are internally consistent in the way that this volunteer expected, and all are dynamic and subject to change of many kinds. Many people besides volunteers join and leave institutions; the economic situation changes. The limits of an agency perspective that inadvertently ignores this dynamism was acknowledged by the VSO programme director in April 1998:

> 'How often we see (placements) as if the volunteer is the only changing factor, and are then surprised when other things happen… Perhaps the head is pushing for change, or there are other staff coming and going…' [Jak1:17].

Perhaps as an attempt to narrow this gap in perception, a strategic plan for VSO Indonesia proposes a wider engagement with institutions. Even here though, the engagement is justified in terms of the potential benefit to the Indonesian organisations, rather than the opportunity to better understand the development of these organisations:

> VSO should not restrict partnerships to those organisations which currently have volunteers. Indonesian organisations could benefit from working with VSO before they have ever had a volunteer, between volunteer placements, or after volunteer placements are no longer appropriate. Such partnerships could include VSO sponsored workshops, short term volunteer/colleague visits/exchanges, networking, and/or assistance with access to information, resources and funding (VSO Indonesia, 1999).

Problematising the organisational perspective was on the agenda of a recent regional VSO conference, as reported to volunteers and returned volunteers in a recent in-house publication:

> A session on organisational learning proposed turning VSO inside out. Not as odd as it sounds. The conventional organogram of VSO has (the director) at the top, the various Divisions below him. Programme offices, like volunteers, the organisations they work with or the ultimate beneficiaries make no appearance. The proposal … is for a new perspective featuring concentric rectangles with beneficiaries in the middle and people/departments within VSO around them, those working most closely with them closest to the centre and people like (the director) way out on the edge. Certainly a new and entirely valid way of looking at our work. (Sane, 1999).

The issue of volunteercentrism is not a new one. It was memorably noted by one respondent who had been a volunteer in Nigeria in the early 1970's, quoting some words of a returned volunteer to his group before he left the UK: 'Don't think of yourselves going out to anything: you are going <u>into</u> something'. In other words: remember that it is you who are the strangers, you who are the newcomers, you who must fit in to what is a new culture only for you. But the centre-periphery relationship fundamental to colonialism is a continuing influence on UK perspectives with regard to travel and location in the South. 'Going out there' still has meaning for some volunteers today:

> 'I'm going out there as an upgrader for English language' [EL16:36]

> 'she's an older teacher… many more years of teaching experience than me … I was concerned about going out as a fairly young teacher' [m13:18]

It is perhaps not surprising that volunteers and agency staff should sometimes overestimate their role in change, in view of the dramatic experience of the departure for and work in another country, the need to represent volunteering to funding bodies in a particular way, and the language

of 'placement' which has developed as description. There is something attractive about this naïve confidence, which after all partly relates to the individual nature of volunteer encounters. Even dramatic historical events, such as the fall of the Suharto regime in Indonesia in May 1998, are ultimately experienced in relation to processes such as arriving in a new place and finding one's feet:

> 'Arrived in Bandung on the 12th May - great timing! Everyone somewhat preoccupied during subsequent two weeks - and obviously anxious too. Some concern shown for my welfare as new and didn't know way round, but this a part of general apprehension re 20th May. There weren't any problems here and everything has returned to what I assume is normal remarkably quickly' [letter from volunteer, Bandung2:8].

Such an intimate and local view of historical events in another country is an important feature of volunteer placements. Volunteers first leave the messiness of a particular, daily, personal, professional and social life in their home country, focusing on an externally-constructed, abstract orderliness represented initially by their job description. They then enter into the messiness of their interpretations and actions and the new responsibilities entailed in living in a new context. Volunteers share some features of tourists and ethnographers, who are alike insofar as they

> 'travel to foreign areas, reside there temporarily, observe native peoples, and return with accounts and stories of their observations' (Bruner 1995, pp.231-232).

Bruner goes on to differentiate aspects of the practice of ethnographers and tourists, in a way that makes it clear that in terms of practice, volunteers are more like ethnographers than tourists. The process of volunteer placements, like that of anthropological field work, exposes the outsider in a way that tourists, particularly on package tours, do not experience:

> '.. what the tourists talk about is other tours and tourism more than Indonesia, so that in their conversations on the journey, which are about status and consumerism, they never really leave home. What the tourists surrender is not their structural position in a home society but rather control over their journey' (Bruner 1995, p.237).

Some volunteer accounts suggest exactly the kind of surrender of their structural position that is conceptualised here. As was noted in the early part of the chapter, it is difficult to maintain a separate existence from those with whom one lives and works for several years. Sometimes this surrender of structural position seems too difficult:

> 'Professionally my skills have been well-matched to this post, personally I am not quite so sure. I am a little too lazy. I also feel very isolated: maybe my personality would be more suited to a bigger town with more Western contact. ... Some of the 'highs' have been quite simply teaching, not with any special techniques, just very traditional but leaving the classroom feeling incredibly elated and then being frustrated at not having anyone to share it with. Just last week, someone asked me if I ever felt lonely and I confidently said I never feel lonely. Two days later I was desperately lonely and depressed in the midst of an attack of malaria. What's worse is that it was a holiday' [volunteer report, WF8:15-17].

Of the classical anthropologists, Malinowski (1989) was perhaps the first to openly reflect on the difficulties involved in surrendering his position. His posthumously-published diary is fascinating for the confessional tone it shares with some volunteer accounts of their ways of dealing with people, self and environment. It is also replete with resolutions and upbeat assessments of his progress:

> 'I promised myself I would read no more novels (ibid. p.17) …
>
> At moments I was very exalted… I have accomplished a good deal…. In the light of old fears and uncertainties I have decidedly won a victory' (ibid. p.97).

His account also reveals his many frustrations on a day to day basis with the people whose life he had come to study. Geertz (1988) comments:

> 'The problem the diary forefronts... is that there is a lot more than native life to plunge into if one is to attempt this total immersion approach to ethnography. There is the landscape. There is the isolation. There is the local European population. There is the memory of home and what one has left. There is the sense of vocation and where one is going. And.. there is the capriciousness of one's passions, the weakness of one's constitution, and the vagrancies of one's thoughts' (p.78).

This much is common to the experience of most volunteers in this study, highlighting the fact that in all these respects, there are considerable differences in the experience of the volunteer placement for volunteer and colleague.

Conceptualised as a social world, volunteering is seen to hold together through the commitment of its many participants. This has implications for the experience of volunteer and colleagues, particularly in shaping the initial difference between them. But it also becomes clear that as a social world, volunteering is incoherent and complex. There are, for example, significant variations and changes in the commitment of volunteers and colleagues to volunteering as an activity. Analysis of volunteering as a social world does not provide access to the meaning that the opportunity comes to have for participants, or the learning process that their participation entails. The social world of volunteering frames the initial interactions between participants, but not the rich possibilities that such interactions offer.

In the following chapter, I address this issue through a consideration of writings in anthropology, development and feminist sociology. A theoretical framework is identified which forefronts the interactions between participants in placements, and particularly the learning process involved. In Chapter Four, this framework is used to interrogate the methodology adopted in the fieldwork.

# Chapter Three: Learning and Participation

## Epistemological considerations: learning in a context of difference

In this chapter, a theoretical framework is identified which will support the generation and analysis of data about learning in the volunteer placement, as a person from one social world arrives to work with people from a very different one. As I argued previously, prior to the volunteer placement volunteer and colleagues have lived in different social structures and vastly different economies. Most have grown up within different linguistic and geographical environments, within nations and communities with very different histories. They have relatively few experiences in common.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective (Blumer, 1969), individuals learn and construct new meanings through participation in social action which influence their subsequent actions. In the volunteer placement, the context of difference makes each stage of such learning potentially rich but problematic. Participants' ongoing construction of meaning in this context would be expected to offer a challenge to their basic assumptions, which might destabilise their commitment to their social worlds.

A theoretical framework must reach beyond a single social world, and beyond the individual learner, to explain how difference can act as both a barrier and a stimulus to learning. The notion of social learning is helpful, drawing attention to the availability of opportunities to learn:

> 'Individually we may spend our time trying to learn things, but… however hard we try, we can only learn what is around to be learned…. If we can stop focusing on who learns more or less of particular, culturally well-defined fragments of knowledge, and ask questions instead about what is around to be learned, in what circumstances, and to what end, learning achievements would become statements about the points of contact available to persons in various social settings' (McDermott 1993, p.277).

In terms of available points of contact, the social worlds of Chapter Two are rich but relatively closed learning systems; opportunities for learning are plentiful *within* them, but of a different order across their boundary. Insofar as different participants remain within their social worlds, where the process of learning maintains and strengthens their basic assumptions.

In contrast, participants in volunteer placements testify to powerful learning, but find it difficult to give an account of what they have learnt. Where little can be taken for granted, learning is a complex social process involving material and other transactions, not a purely individual cognitive process. Lave (1991) locates learning somewhere between the person, the interaction and the social world:

> 'Learning is neither wholly subjective nor fully encompassed in human interaction, and it is not constituted separately from the social world (with its own structures and meanings) of which it is part' (ibid. p.64).

Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of 'legitimate peripheral participation' focuses attention on the learning that occurs when experienced practitioners and novices participate together in a 'community of practice'. This is a construct which I will return to in the chapters which follow. Within a community of people engaged in working towards a common goal, novices learn to

function technically as practitioners because they are developing identities as participants. 'Developing an identity as a member of a community and becoming knowledgably skilful are part of the same process with the former motivating, shaping and giving meaning to the latter, which it subsumes' (Lave 1991, p.65). This complex learning takes place through gradually increasing engagement: through conversations, through meetings, through access to 'old timers' (Lave and Wenger 1991, p.95). A novice learns what is *normal* through informal conversations, observation, and by taking part. Through participation, a novice can 'assemble a general idea of what constitutes the practice of the community… (which includes an) understanding of how, when and about what old-timers collaborate, collude and collide; and what they enjoy, dislike, respect and admire' (ibid. p.95). Learning is fundamental to the increasing participation of a newcomer in the practice of a community. An appropriate starting point for a learning framework in a placement may be to locate the volunteer as such a newcomer.

In seeing how these notions of learning apply to the volunteer placement, it is necessary to understand the implications of the diversity in participants' backgrounds. Writings from development studies and anthropology come out of a context where such difference is routine, and it is to them that we turn next. This encounter suggests a perspective in which the focus of attention is the interaction between people from diverse backgrounds, and this is explored through the literature of linguistic history and anthropology.

## The context of difference in development projects and anthropology

As authors who make a link between difficulties and participant perspectives in development projects, Leach (1991) and Chambers (1983) pose an educational challenge: how might a better understanding of learning processes lead to new positioning and understanding in a context of difference?

Leach (1991) conducted an extended series of interviews with Sudanese and expatriate personnel involved in aid projects in Sudan, tracing common differences in their perceptions with regard to the main benefits of each project, its sustainability, the extent of consultation between partners, roles within the institution and the need for the transfer of knowledge and skills. She was able to base her analysis on identifiable groups of people, finding that '… perception gaps existed between several groups of individuals, primarily between expatriates and Sudanese but also between local management and staff…' (ibid. p.158) and concluding that perception gaps

> '… contributed to the low levels of commitment and co-operation on the Sudanese side, excessive control on the expatriate side, and to a frequently poor rate of project success' (ibid. p.181).

Leach suggests that these perception gaps are caused by culture (ibid. p.160), but also by an economic differential, whereby the Sudanese

> 'see themselves working with expatriates whose salaries may be as much as 15 times their own, and whose living standards reflect this disparity' (ibid. p.157).

This differential caused resentment on the part of the Sudanese, but the expatriates involved appeared not to understand this. 'It is likely that the local staff's resentment frequently led to their

active non-cooperation, which was interpreted by the expatriates as conservatism, indifference or laziness' (ibid. p.158). In other words, resentment which is entirely understandable from within the economic framework adopted by the Sudanese, is interpreted as a cultural characteristic by expatriate workers who do not step back to see themselves in economic relation to the Sudanese. They use the concept of ‘Sudanese culture’ to explain behaviour which they do not otherwise comprehend.

In terms of social worlds, the expatriate and Sudanese groups have different primary commitments, with both groups working to maintain their legitimacy and boundaries. The use of cultural difference as an explanation ('indifferent, lazy Sudanese') can be seen as a way of maintaining the boundary of the expatriate social world, and so legitimising the enormous salary differential and difference in status in projects. For the Sudanese, it is not cultural but economic difference which divides the two groups. Any learning processes which have gone on have strengthened these interpretations, rather than challenging them.

Anthropologists have been grappling with issues of difference for many years; they have come a long way in learning about the position of their own practice in the world. Much of the anthropology of thirty years ago was dispassionate and unreflexive. Some of the teachers I worked with in Irian Jaya were part of the Marind-Anim, about whom an ethnography had been written thirty years earlier. Van Baal (1966) had probed deeply and carefully into the lifeworld of the group, and written a widely-respected and comprehensive account of that lifeworld, coming to the conclusion that their practices had been leading to a moral dead end; that if the Dutch colonial power had not intervened, their culture would have destroyed them. The author became a colonial administrator in Irian.

Thirty years on, I mentioned this ethnography to the headteacher of a local secondary school, himself a member of this group and an enormously respected and significant local leader. He was full of outrage at what had been perceived by the Marind as an act of betrayal; having trusted van Baal with secrets of their culture, they perceived that his account had defined them in terms of that culture whilst doing little to assist them in their development as a people.

Anthropologists have become aware that ethnographic accounts are double-edged swords. Differences do exist between peoples, and representations of others' cultural perspectives are valuable defences against the assumption that we are all essentially the same, an insidious assumption which shades easily towards a lie that everyone is like us:

> 'In the face of undeniably global structures of political and economic power, ethnography, as the practical embodiment of relativism and interpretive anthropology, challenges all those views of reality in social thought which prematurely overlook or reduce cultural diversity for the sake of the capacity to generalise or to affirm universal values…’ (Marcus and Fischer 1986, pp.32-33).

Or, as one of the most eminent practitioners of interpretive anthropology has it:

> 'To see others as sharing a nature with ourselves is the merest decency. But it is from the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst others, as a local example of the forms human life has locally taken, a case among cases, a world among worlds, that… largeness of mind… comes' (Geertz, 1983 p.16).

Unfortunately, although many anthropologists struggle with integrity towards such largeness of mind, the most comprehensive and well-meaning interpretations of cultures also constitute organising frameworks which can dominate views of others and act as barriers to the development of mutual understanding. Critical contributors to anthropological discourse (ie. Rosaldo, 1993; Agar, 1994; Whitaker, 1996) have warned that when interpreted as an attribute of a group of people, culture is a blunt and generalising instrument which can lead to mistaken assumptions. The notion of cultural difference can inadvertently support the concept of an inherent and characteristic difference between peoples, supporting constructions of others which are static and isolated from political analysis. In the wrong hands, 'culture' can be put to use in generating simplistic, generalised and prejudicial explanations of behaviour. In language education, for example, Holliday (1999) writes of being ‘vulnerable to a culturist reduction of “foreign” students, teachers and their educational contexts’ (p.237).

Leach's (1991) study is an example of how prejudicial and generalising representations of the other can be used to justify and strengthen inequalities. Some representation of the other is unavoidable as we learn about differences, but Chambers (1983) suggests that we should pay more attention to the conditions under which that learning takes place. His explanation for the distorted understanding of 'outsider' professionals is the barrier to learning that exists in their relationship with those who are subject to poverty:

> 'Outsiders’ views of the poor are distorted in many ways. Lack of contact or communication permits them to form views without the inconvenience of knowledge, let alone personal exposure. Poor people are rarely met; when they are met, they often do not speak; when they do speak, they are often cautious and deferential; and what they say is often either not listened to, or brushed aside, or interpreted in a bad light. Any attempt to understand the poor, and to learn from them, has to begin with introspection by the outsiders themselves… above all we have to treat with suspicion beliefs and interpretations which we find comforting…’ (ibid. p104).

He describes two cultures (social worlds) among the professionals involved in development: that of the academic and the practitioner, each with a favoured explanation for poverty which legitimates their involvement in the field.

> '… the negative social science pole attracts and sustains those who explain poverty in social, economic and political terms, while the positive practitioner pole attracts and sustains those who explain it in physical and ecological terms’ (ibid. p.35).

These professional groups belong to different social worlds from poor people, sharing different resources and commitments. Chambers (1983) explores how the factors which make or keep people poor are also the barriers that prevent both groups of outsiders from a fuller understanding of poor people and their poverty. He locates five different biases which "impede outsiders' contact with rural poverty…" (ibid. p.13). These include spatial bias towards locations near cities and main roads (ibid. pp.13-15); bias towards existing projects (ibid. pp.16-17); bias towards certain people (including male rather than female, and active, fit people rather than apathetic or weak people) (ibid. pp.18-19); bias towards the dry season, and towards the outsider professional's own specialism. In other words, outsiders' learning about poverty is prone to these distortions. Failing

to break through barriers of physical, personal and professional distance, outsiders misunderstand the perspectives of the poor.

This series of biases can also be understood as dimensions relevant to the opportunities for and quality of learning between people from different backgrounds. Chambers' own injunction to and hope of development professionals is that they take steps to "reverse these biases" in order to learn more about poor people and poverty (ibid. pp.168).

### Foregrounding learning

Participants' identification with a social world helps to explain the barriers and tensions in volunteer placements, and the development of perception gaps explains the strengthening of structural inequalities and injustices. Yet learning about each other and the context through the course of an encounter can lead to the development of understanding. Young (1996) describes how the need for joint action, in particular, can create the conditions for relationships within a context of cultural difference:

> 'The context in which intercultural communication takes place will often be one where there is a need to coordinate the action of members of different cultures, reach agreements, negotiate, and the like… It is important not to forget the concreteness of contexts….[for] too great a stress on the world-defining … power of culture would theoretically close off this avenue of reconciliation' (pp.116-117)

Cultural difference and social world need not be the framework through which we explain and analyse encounters. Attempting to view afresh some of the encounters of colonialism, Pratt (1992) defines the 'contact zone':

> '… the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, racial inequality, and intractable conflict' (p.6).

Rather than define groups of geographically and historically separated people according to their different cultures and then interpreting their encounter in these terms, the contact perspective draws attention first to the mutual and interacting constructions developed by those groups of people when they meet. Applied to colonial times, this alternative framework makes it possible to

> 'imagine "Europe" as … constructing itself from the outside in, out of materials infiltrated, donated, absorbed, appropriated and imposed from contact zones all over the planet… Westerners are accustomed to thinking of romantic projects of liberty, individualism, and liberalism as emanating *from* Europe *to* the colonial periphery, but less accustomed to thinking about emanations *from* the contact zones *back* into Europe' (Pratt 1992, pp.137-138).

Pratt (1992) draws heavily on representations from travel literature from the eighteenth century, counterpointed with some South American sources, as the data for her analysis of influences both *on* and *of* European constructions of South America and Africa. She aims 'to foreground the interactive, improvisational dimensions of colonial encounters so easily ignored or suppressed by diffusionist accounts of conquest and domination' (ibid. p.7) by contrasting the accounts of travellers who are differently positioned in respect to the world they travel through (accounts by

men and women, for example, and at different stages of history) and by pointing out silences and gaps in the literature, the conventions of which

> 'constitute the European subject as a self-sufficient, monadic source of knowledge … [which] virtually guarantees that the interactional history of the representation will turn up only as traces, or … as autoethnographic materials' (ibid. p.136).

The 'interactional history of the representation' is central to Pratt's analysis. Adopting the contact perspective, she is able to focus on what is missing in the accounts she studies: the mechanisms by which knowledge was constructed, transformed and erased. Humboldt, for instance, wrote extensively during and after his travels in South America early in the nineteenth century. Pratt (1992) asks,

> 'To what extent was Humboldt a transculturator, transporting to Europe knowledges American in origin?… Humboldt prided himself on being the first person to bring guano to Europe as a fertiliser… of course Humboldt's discovery consisted of coastal Peruvians telling him of the substance and its fertilising properties. Who knows what their assumptions and expectations were?' (ibid. p.135-136).

Pratt's contribution is to awaken interest in the relationship, in general the distance, between the contingent encounter and the finished account. Some anthropologists have written from just such an interactional perspective. Scheper-Hughes' (1992) first experience in a desperately impoverished urban community in North Eastern Brazil was as a Peace Corps volunteer in the mid-1960's, where she describes her role as a kind of 'injection doctor' and community organiser, often struggling to act 'within a context of radical, sometimes opaque, cultural difference' (p.8). In her diverse encounters with women and in her writing, she stands against the cultural relativism which would disallow moral engagement; for example, her understanding of local culture neither silences her questioning of the morality of her informants, nor absolves her of the need for political action informed by her developing understanding of the context in which this morality has developed. In Pratt's terms, Scheper-Hughes lives and writes in the ambiguous space of the contact zone, in which the touchstone of her work is 'our personal accountability and answerability to the other' (ibid. p.24). The ethical and truth values in her representations come from the context of that engagement and the network of relationships which it entails.

Reflecting on her years of ethnographic work in the community, Scheper-Hughes describes how she positioned herself in various different ways: as an outsider, a political activist, a friend and as a 'keeper of the records… the one who listens, observes, records and tries to interpret human lives, as does the traditional country doctor.. counted on to remember key events in the personal lives and the life history of the parish and to "keep trust" ' (ibid. p.29). The ethnographic product of this engagement constructs links and relationships as much as difference and otherness. It is the record of a human being making contact with others, making mistakes and learning from the experience. It is also a record of legitimate peripheral participation: the development of identity as a member of a community of practice.

For Scheper-Hughes, as for Pratt, a full, accurate and ethical representation of the other must contain within itself an account of its own production; of the relationships, events, and interpretations through which knowledge was constructed and erased.

Smith's (1988) feminist sociological perspective is helpful in developing the implications of the contact perspective for this research. In a male-dominated social context, she argues for an epistemology which starts not from ideology but from everyday relations:

> 'The relation of the local and particular to generalized social relations is not a conceptual or methodological issue, it is a property of social organisation. The particular 'case' is not particular in the aspects that are of concern to the inquirer…. it presents itself to us rather as a point of entry, the locus of an experiencing subject or subjects, into a larger social and economic process. The problematic of the everyday world arises precisely at the juncture of particular experience, with generalizing and abstracted forms of social relations organizing a division of labor in society at large' (ibid. p.157).

To treat the everyday world as a problematic is to trace the way in which everyday activities and events relate to the organisation and division in society. Pratt (1992) achieves this through the juxtaposition of travellers' accounts and the nature of scientific and other discourse in Europe.

In a similar way, the volunteer placement can be studied as a construction of its participants, and later related to dominant discourses of development and globalisation. In this chapter, I have drawn upon the insights of anthropologists, a development practitioner, a linguistic historian and a feminist sociologist in finding a methodological position from which to do this. From this position, the convenient concept of culture is treated with suspicion, and attention is focused on the details of the interaction between people from different contexts, for example from North and South.

In the next chapter, I describe how I undertook the methodological task of generating data about the volunteer placement as a located subject, with my own history and experience of volunteering. Like the volunteer placement, the research itself takes place in the contact zone, which constitutes an theoretical position from which to evaluate research activities. After the fact, there is much to learn about the nature of the contact zone through reflection on the research process.

## Chapter Four: Fieldwork in the context of difference

The empirical research conducted for this thesis is largely a process of learning about participants' experience and interactions. In this chapter, I reflect on the methodological choices made during this process of learning, and show how one element of the fieldwork, similar in some ways to a survey, led to an important analytical strand focusing on resources and their distribution. This strand is taken up more fully through engagement with the case studies in Chapter Five.

Following the discussion of the preceding chapter, I adopt here a contact perspective with regard to my own learning in the social settings involved. The potential learning achievements of this research are seen as 'statements about the points of contact available to persons in various social settings' (McDermott 1993, p.277). Many decisions about the research process were made in the light of my continuing learning in the setting.

### Planning the fieldwork

My own contact with volunteer placements as 'researcher' recalled my experience as a volunteer, which became a reference point in discussions and interviews with others as a source of empathetic understanding and insight. For example, I knew from that experience that processes in the placement are complex and open to many interpretations, by self and by other people. Research that attempted to address this complexity had to make it possible to generate data from many perspectives and positions.

An option I had rejected early on was to conduct a significant part of the research at the site of my volunteer placement to Irian Jaya. Whilst existing relationships with a wide network of people were available to me there, I felt that my ex-colleagues and I would find it difficult to engage in a different mode together. Another volunteer was working in the same school, and her presence may well have complicated relationships still further; it seemed likely that the data generated would result from a complex mixture of local politics and personal investments as well as the learning engendered through a completed three year placement. I decided to continue to correspond with some individuals by letter rather than to seek any significant re-engagement in Irian. I also considered participant ethnography as a volunteer again myself, but this would have entailed deception; in a political climate of suspicion towards potential activists, the discovery of such misrepresentation would have reflected badly on the volunteer programme.

I adopted a range of methods for generating data to give grounds for revising initial interpretations (Stake 1995, p.110). Observation, interviews and informal conversations in everyday contexts were dominant strategies of data generation, but I also made use of Q methodology: respondent-led interviews structured around a sample of the discourse of volunteers and colleagues. This is described towards the end of this chapter.

Through the fieldwork and the volunteer agency, I sought out accounts that were generated for other purposes. Volunteers' letters to friends and relatives, diaries, and reports and letters to and from the volunteer agency referred to earlier and later stages in placements that I visited. But these were accounts only from a volunteer perspective. Generation of data relating to both volunteers

and their colleagues required engagement in the placement setting. There was a strong case for spending many weeks in one placement, to develop relationships with a volunteer's Indonesian colleagues of the kind that would allow honest and open dialogue. Ex-volunteers from Indonesia voiced the concern that such dialogue would not be possible in a short visit:

> 'One of the things that has struck me from being here in Ecuador is how openly critical people are. I think it is at the other extreme from the Indonesian culture… I can imagine that it might be difficult culturally for people to be really critical' (Maxine, volunteer science teacher, 4th May, 1998).

However, prolonged ethnographic fieldwork in a few selected sites would have been problematic in other ways. The volunteering encounter takes place between a volunteer from a relatively similar background to myself, their colleagues and local people in the surrounding community. Many incidents decribed in the data indicate that in the context of a placement, the presence of people from a similar background as the volunteer makes a significant difference to participants' behaviour. For example, Maxine joined another volunteer Suzanne in a house on the school compound for almost a year, and it was a significant problem for both of them:

> 'I know Maxine has written to you about the house. There's not much for me to say. I can understand her difficulty living in my shadow sort of thing, and she has to live here for two years, knows what she can put up with, and what she can't' [letter from Suzanne to programme office, Oct 1992, M5:10].
>
> 'I thought about moving, that was because of the other VSO that I shared with…Then the earthquake came… We established a more professional relationship. She didn't stay for too long' [interview with Maxine, March 1999, M13:77].

After Suzanne's departure, Maxine was the only Westerner in town; she linked this to becoming more engaged in the school and local community:

> 'there wasn't a VSO in Maumere, the nearest was say Sarah, who I saw once a week at the most. So life revolved more around work, and social life from living in the compound. There were lots of things, whether births, or funerals, or weddings... just being in each other's houses' [M13:73].

Even during the short visits in the research strategy I adopted, I was a significant visitor for the volunteers and colleagues that I visited, talked and ate with, particularly those whose placements I returned to. The research plan that I eventually adopted entailed considerable travelling. The cyclical process of data generation and analysis which characterises qualitative research was explicitly written into the plan; I would visit placements for a maximum of a few days on one or more occasions, using correspondence by various means before and after the fieldwork period. The choice of the provinces of Nusa Tenggara Timur and Nusa Tenggara Barat (NTT and NTB) as the main site of fieldwork and subsequent ongoing research dialogues had many advantages. I had already visited the main islands of the province. For example, I had some understanding of the effect on communities in Flores of historical events such as the earthquake in December 1992, having stayed with volunteers there a month later. I knew that the five main islands of NTB and NTT share some characteristics, such as a broadly similar level of development and a similarly peripheral location with respect to the central government and the military. I knew too that they

differ significantly in other respects like religious belief, which presented an opportunity to investigate the relationship between such contextual features and placement processes.

The distance and relative inaccessibility of Indonesia from the UK, which create such a disjunction in the social world of volunteering, also had practical, social and psychological implications for me as researcher. I had recently married and become a stepfather, and my partner's dependence on the media for news of Indonesia increased the perceived risks of travel and political instability. The possibility of actual instability contributed further to my need for a flexible design. I opted to travel overland and by sea rather than the unreliable air service. This increased my opportunities to meet local people, learn their views of current issues and experience the archipelago at a local pace and level of comfort. This travel was extremely memorable; the changing contexts remain strongly imprinted on my mind, and the first level of organisation of fieldwork data has always been geographical.

This combination of epistemological and practical design choices led to a flexible fieldwork schedule involving a journey across the islands and back. I planned to pay relatively brief visits to about twenty current and previous placements on the way, and to revisit some of these for slightly longer on the way back. Second visits were significant: I was able to adopt a different style of interview with volunteers and colleagues who were much more confident in my interest and commitment, particularly where they had already received my notes on the first visit by post.

Placements in remote areas are difficult to contact in advance, although telegrams were partially effective; but the same communication difficulty makes for a fairly static population, so I could count on a high probability that I would find most people at their placements when I arrived. Volunteers in the early part of my route had email connections, and I was able to arrange meetings in Lombok from Manchester. I outlined my intentions to a volunteer programme office in Jakarta:

> 'February is approaching, and I have at last got a visa… it seems that the economic crisis is affecting everywhere in Indonesia to some extent… I am hoping to look in detail at the volunteer placement 'in action': what is going on in terms of learning and relationship for both volunteer and their colleagues. I don't want at this stage to narrow the focus too much, certainly I am not looking only for evidence of 'skills transfer' or anything like that. I suspect from thinking about my own work that the effect in those terms is very limited and difficult to find, but there is clearly a lot going on in the meeting between professionals in two very different cultures. I will be encouraging volunteers and counterparts to share their thinking and reflection as much as they want to, and be very happy if some decide that they are prepared to give access to diaries...' (email to volunteer office, Jakarta, 12/01/1998).

## The fieldwork journey

Political and economic instability in Indonesia was increasing at the time of my fieldwork in early 1998. A wave of riots in provincial towns in both NTB and NTT that January signified the deepening economic crisis and marked out the lines of tension in these communities; Chinese businesses were targeted in many places. I found curfews in operation in some towns, but in all cases the police and army had quickly resumed control and no volunteers had left the area. Fieldwork travel became a series of informed compromises as I juggled practical opportunities

(ferry schedules, the availability of overnight buses, the bureaucratic requirement to renew a visa in Kupang in West Timor after two months) with methodological ideals (desire to visit a range of placements, and the advantages of revisiting some).

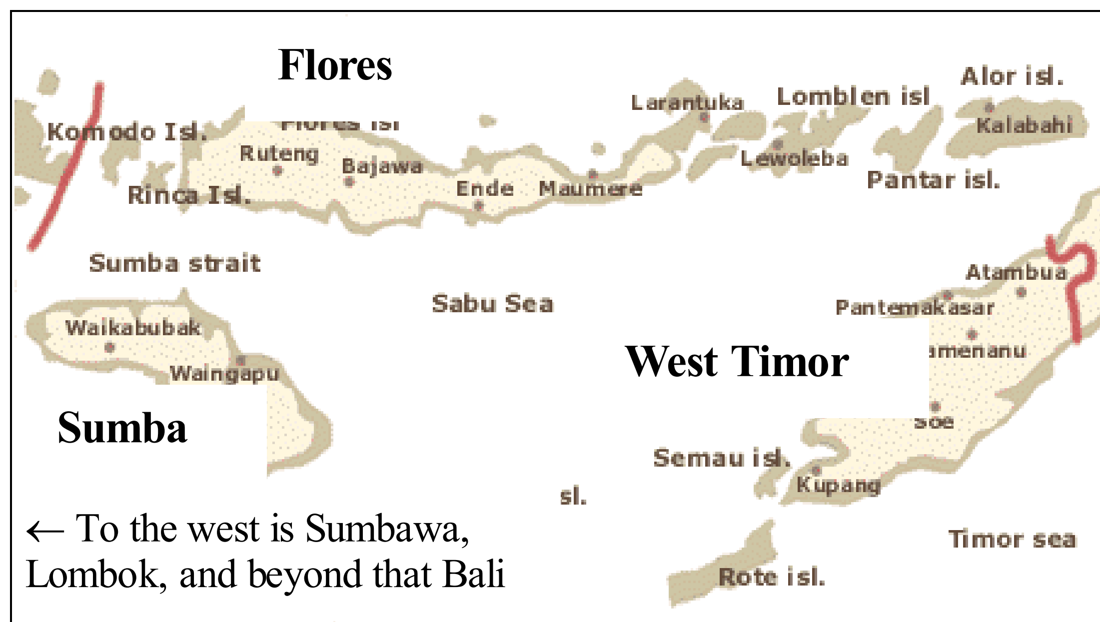


Figure 2: Map of East Nusa Tenggara

An itinerary of my eventual fieldwork journey is included as Appendix IV, in a form which gives details of the placements visited, the volunteer and colleagues interviewed. After a couple of days visiting volunteer agency offices in Jakarta, I flew to Bali. From there I travelled east through Lombok, Sumbawa, Flores, then on to the more remote islands of Lembata and Alor, where I took advantage of a large ship to go straight to Sumba. I paused in Kupang, where I posted written accounts of placements visited to volunteers and their colleagues for checking and further comment on the way back. It was also at this point that I revised my draft Q method statements, using accounts generated on the outward journey.

## Reflections on fieldwork in the contact zone

Before considering the results of the data this generated, I want to reflect further on the implications of the pattern of fieldwork that I have described for my own position as researcher within the "contact zone", whose

> 'practice must be analysed in the same historical, situated terms as any other practice under investigation' (Lave 1991, p.67).

I consider here a general feature of my fieldwork, then two specific instances of interaction with volunteers. Such analysis is necessary in order to understand the validity of the data generated; it is also a valuable insight into the nature of learning in the placement. An important relationship emerges here between the positioning of individuals and their learning, as the process of constructing mutual understanding or shared agreement comes into the foreground.

My own positioning was the subject of contest and negotiation with all participants in volunteer placements. Negotiation with individual headteachers, teachers, volunteers, and pastors was

essential in order to undertake observation and interviews in and around placements. Whilst I did not see my research as an evaluation, they did not know that. My short visits were similar in some respects to those of volunteer programme staff. Like three of the four programme staff at the time of the fieldwork, I had been a volunteer in Indonesia and was reasonably fluent in the language; I had some knowledge of volunteer placements in NTT going back several years. As with programme staff, I stayed either with the volunteer or in a local hotel; like them I was interested to talk with the volunteer, their colleagues, and anyone else with some connection to the placement. Unsurprisingly, people tended to assume that I was part of the volunteer agency, with consequent implications for the way they interacted with me.

When groups of volunteers were together, they could not think of me as part of the volunteer agency; I was an outsider to the group, and they were more hesitant about my role. Volunteers in Sumba initially positioned me using their stereotypes of 'researcher'; in a bar one night they visibly relaxed only after I had offered an account of myself:

> 'It helped to tell my story of marriage and child, I think. People need to have a feel of where I am coming from, especially invading their lives in such rapid fashion as this' [fieldnotes, S2:190]

Making sense is an active process, and social research is only a more systematic version of an interpretive process in which <u>all</u> human beings are engaged as we make sense of our social world.. Our ‘natural attitude’ (Schutz, cited in Heritage 1987, p.230) as human beings involves the suspension of doubt that things are not as they have always been. We assume that past experience will be a reliable guide to the present; we actively make sense of the stream of experience, using our stock of typified knowledge. Similarly, we make a common assumption that our first experience of a new situation represents the static reality of that situation: the newly-arrived volunteer assumes that the people that met her at the airport meet every guest in the same way, that the present boss has always been in charge; in their turn, colleagues may assume that this new arrival, unable to speak Indonesian, is very unskilled.

In these terms, my short biographical account in the bar was a step in the construction of a different and mutual understanding. Learning and the establishment of relationship are closely linked, if mutual understanding and shared agreement are the result of an act of construction rather than deduction:

> 'Shared agreement refers to various social methods for accomplishing the member’s recognition that something was said-according-to-a-rule and *not* the demonstrable matching of substantive matters. The appropriate image of a common understanding is therefore an *operation* rather than a common intersection of overlapping sets’ (Garfinkel 1984, p.30, my italics).

Within that bar, as in any social context, there were a huge number of taken-for-granted features which all parties assumed the others have in mind. These contextual details include rules governing behaviour in specific situations; classrooms, homes and streets are differently-ordered contexts because actors are aware of sets of rules specific to those places, and construct their behaviour in relation to those rules. In that bar, those volunteers and I moved towards a sense of mutual understanding not because we identified the overlap in our view of the world, but because

the account that I produced at that moment and in that manner was one that the others found appropriate in that setting.

The construction of agreement through negotiation holds most interest in this thesis where it takes place between people from different backgrounds (Young, 1996). For the moment though, I continue to reflect on the process of constructing shared agreement between myself and people with a similar background. This process is highly visible again in the course of an interaction between a volunteer called Graham and myself, as we worked out a mutually acceptable version of felt need engendered by feelings of isolation. Significantly, we drew explicitly on preconceptions in this process, some of which relate to the host culture. The interaction began with Graham's account of the observations of a third volunteer, of my treatment by his colleagues:

> 'Something that Phil[7] mentioned to me, about when you were in Larantuka, as another aspect of the culture: because you are a married man, you immediately get a tonne of respect from people; they warm to you straight away. And Phil noticed… that he never got that kind of reception. And maybe it's the same with me; because I'm still single, I have less respect. You know, people … reach a certain age, get a girlfriend, get married, have kids, that's the way things go, they're the people that are respected in this society' [EL7:351-353].

This account was constructed in relation to volunteers’ shared perceptions of local gendered norms, to colleagues’ and volunteers’ perceptions of me in the field, and to volunteers' perception of themselves. Placed alongside other accounts dealing with similar issues, some consensus might emerge about the status of those norms and about perceptions of me as researcher. This consensus might be seen as describing an element of the research context.

But a consideration of what this account achieves in its context relates more directly to the issue of learning: the premise being that the production of any account is part of the cycle of learning of participants. Graham’s account explains the difference in status that Phil felt so keenly in terms of a cultural norm that is particular to Indonesia, a cultural norm also accounts for a lack of respect towards him, Graham. I interpreted his account as positioning me as conforming to this Indonesian norm; I felt uncomfortable with this, and constructed an empathising account of my own experience. In the several turns of conversation which followed, we negotiated our way towards a shared perspective:

> Andy: I was so stressed out for three years in Merauke I said I'm never going to work abroad again unless I'm married. That's basically what I decided. It was just constant: 'What's the matter with you... ?' Awful.
>
> Graham: Well, I.. don't mind it any more. It just.. doesn't bother me. I don't see, feel any responsibility to go and find myself a wife. I don't think it should be done like that. It just happens.
>
> Andy: No, quite, it doesn't work like that; it does just happen; but the thing was whether to go abroad again..
>
> Graham: Yes. Because of the hassle that you were getting from people.

[7] Phil is the volunteer in case study II, in Chapter Five.

In this interaction, accounts are social actions performing several functions. Accounts represent a perceived reality, but they also play a role in positioning Graham and myself as we construct a measure of shared agreement about moral choices in relation to perceived social norms, *despite the fact that we drew upon entirely separate experiences of relationships with women and of living in Indonesia*. As we make sense, so we simplify; for instance, my account to Graham was much more coherent (and crass) than the experience that it represents. In this way, a by-product of our shared agreement is a strengthening of our stereotype of Indonesian gender relations. The 'other' is thereby elaborated in our interaction:

> 'The other is never outside or beyond us; it emerges forcefully, within cultural discourse, when we *think* we speak most intimately and indigenously "between ourselves" ' (Bhabha 1990, p.4).

This kind of talk occurs often between different 'generations' of volunteers. When Malinowski (1989) showed other Europeans around his ethnographic patch:

> 'I saw and felt the utter drabness of the Ririwira villages; I saw them through their eyes… but forgot to look at them with my own' (p.163)

Less poetically, my research encounter with Graham shows macro-level elements of cultural stereotyping being used as resources for the interactive production of a shared perspective (Layder 1993, p.106). Graham and I construct a version of reality which makes sense in terms of our experience as volunteers, and our perceptions of Indonesian cultural norms. Both of us are implicated; this encounter positions us as we actively strengthen perceived cultural norms relating to gendered relationships. We epitomise the understanding that

> 'we… do fieldwork by establishing relationships, and by learning to see, think and be in another culture, and we do this as persons of a particular age, sexual orientation, belief, educational background, ethnic identity and class. … we also do it as women and men' (Bell et al. 1993, p1).

But doing fieldwork as persons of identity does not imply that we must only work from a single, blinkered position. Research is a process of learning, and the researcher's position can change just as much as the position of the learning volunteer or colleague. Moreover, different modes of research interaction stimulate learning and facilitate different positions. The application of a semi quantitative research procedure called 'Q-sort' represented just such a change in research mode.

## Appropriate dimensions of analysis from a contact perspective

The Q-sort process (e.g..Brown, 1986; McKeown, 1988; and see Appendix III) involves presenting a set of participant perspectives about volunteer placements to those same participants and others, for clarification and further comment. The features of the placement presented in the Q-sort were selected with regard to the placement as an activity system (Engestrom, 1993). Fifty four statements were developed which referred to the person of the volunteer and colleagues, the activities in which they engaged, and the wider context in which the placement was situated, so that the interaction between these elements of the placement system could be explored. For example, one statement read 'We have developed clear and agreed aims'. Along with the others, this was written on a card, and participants were asked individually to place each card along a

nine-point scale according to how well they considered each one to represent their placement. Twenty-seven people completed this Q-sort, of whom eleven are Indonesian colleagues and sixteen are volunteers. A photograph of one of the participants sorting the cards is included in case study II. The statements are included in Appendix III. They were written in both Indonesian and English.

All participants reported that working through the Q-sort was an enjoyable and stimulating experience. As an interview, it was at once comprehensive, and yet controlled by participants in respect of what they chose to say. When used with volunteers whose placement had ended a couple of years earlier, the particularity of the statements on cards evoked details about the placement, whilst the playful element of moving and placing cards appeared to create a space for relatively free discussion of these specific events and people.

According to standard Q methodological procedure, factor analysis (Brown, 1986) was used to identify groups of people whose way of sorting the cards is similar to each other, and different from the rest. The resulting analysis is a map of similarities and differences in the way participants used the limited discourse represented by the statements to describe their placement. Seven distinct groups of participants were identified through this procedure, each group being represented by a summary perspective outlined below. Thus there are two outcomes of interest: the membership of each group of participants who described their placement in a similar way to each other, and the particular way that they described it.

In terms of group membership, it is striking that of the eleven Indonesian colleagues who participated in the Q-sort, all but one person sorted the statements in a similar way to each other and one long-term volunteer, thus forming Group 1 (see below). The rest of the volunteers, through their responses, divided statistically into six groups of between two and five people (Groups 2 to 7).

In terms of the content of descriptions, scrutiny of the results shows a measure of agreement among nearly all participants. They considered their work to be neither particularly enjoyable nor unenjoyable. All participants described volunteers as having adapted pretty well to the local situation, as spending a lot of time working, and as learning a lot through the placement.

These findings point to two important limitations in the procedure described as a way of eliciting participant descriptions of volunteer placements. Firstly, the statements were designed to stimulate a reflective consideration of the placement on the various issues, and did not facilitate representation of multiple or changing perspectives from each participant. Secondly, the procedure as described yields no subjective interpretation of the statements. For example, it is not possible to know what each participant meant when they described the volunteers as 'learning a lot'.

However, the sorting of the statements was followed by an interview that addressed both of these limitations. Where possible, participants were asked to explain or otherwise comment on their positioning of the statements, particularly those that they found most significant in describing the placement, and those which they found it problematic to place. This data is used later in the construction of case studies.

Here we concentrate firstly on the interpretation of the statistical Q-sort analysis. The interpretation of results that follow concentrate on what is *distinctive* about each group, using a procedure for comparison described in detail in Appendix III. It is important to note that no single participant would describe their placement verbally in exactly these terms; nevertheless, they are valid descriptions for these groups of participants. Following each description, the most significant issues are highlighted. This way of reading the summaries is then discussed in terms of what it suggests about the processes going on in the volunteer placement including learning.

Group 1: Ten Indonesian colleagues (and one volunteer) broadly share this very positive representation of the placement, portrayed here as functioning well in the institution and as effective in meeting real, agreed needs. Volunteers are considered to be well-received and included; colleagues and volunteers relate well, and are committed to their work. People close to this view say that the volunteer is effective, willing and critical, close friends with colleagues. No-one is excluded from the institution, neither women nor outsiders, and religion is irrelevant to practice. There is support for the placement in the institution, and the placement brings together Indonesian people who have not worked together before.

Colleagues and volunteers spend all their time in the placement, which is considered to be part of a wider plan. They spend time together outside work. There is a belief that a two year placement is not sufficient to achieve lasting change. Information moves freely in the placement; there is good communication between volunteer and colleagues, who are keen to try new ideas. The whole placement has clear aims, and fits in with traditions and beliefs. In terms of material resources, the placement is not seen as significantly alleviating poverty.

From a social world perspective, this description is a view from within a social world, in which the volunteer is being written as a member. Group 1's description of the placement **positions** the participants in very positive relation to each other:

> 'With positioning, the focus is on the way in which the discursive practices constitute the speakers and hearers in certain ways and yet at the same time as a resource through which speakers and hearers can negotiate new positions… position is what is created in and through talk as the speakers and hearers take themselves up as persons' (Davies and Harre 1990, p.63).

The material outcomes of the placement are seen to be less important.

Group 2: Positioning of participants is a less dominant process for this group of volunteers. An automatic influence is accorded to Westerners, and religion is seen to be relevant. Relationships within the placement are considered to be stress-free. Whilst volunteers spend all their time working in the placement, colleagues have commitments elsewhere; but they normally work together. Participants have planned carefully for the future, and two years is enough to make a lasting change. The volunteer is not very critical of existing practice. Participants have a laugh together; the flow of information in the placement is unproblematic. There is little attempt to fit practice to local belief. But they do spend time talking about the distribution of other resources: time, space and money. Working in this area is not considered to differ significantly from work in other parts of this area of Indonesia. Probably the most significant issue in this description is **time**;

plans are seen as realistic, so that desired change can happen in the time available, but the distribution of time between people and activities is a subject which requires ongoing negotiation. David, the volunteer in the first case study in Chapter Five, was most closely correlated with this perspective, along with three other volunteers, and Yuyun, an Indonesian colleague referred to at the end of the fourth case study.

Group 3: In these placements, by contrast, volunteers feel that being Western gives them no automatic influence. The volunteer enjoys being there, feels like one of the staff, included and able to be critical in the context of a well-respected institution. Changing the attitude of others is not seen as a priority. Participants have a laugh together. They spend time together socially, but the volunteer is also busy doing other things outside work. The volunteer has been ill quite a lot. The most noteworthy feature of the placement according to this description is the **positioning** of the volunteer as one of the staff, together with a lack of intention to reposition others by changing attitudes. This factor represented two volunteers.

Group 4: Volunteers in these placements describe them as bringing Indonesians together who have not worked together before. Women have equal status and Westerners have automatic influence. Many people had prior expectations of the placement, but colleagues do not appear keen to take up new ideas. Colleagues are busy outside work, and participants do little planning together. There has not been much effect on poverty. This is seen as a distinctively different place to work from other parts of this province, and not a particularly enjoyable place to live. In this description a prominent issue is the **positioning** of people through fixed characteristics, and there is a problematic flow of **information** between participants. It appears that there are significant barriers to collaboration. Two volunteers were represented by this factor.

Group 5: This factor describes colleagues as not learning much from the placement. The volunteer is seen to be less effective than colleagues in some ways. The placement brings together Indonesians who have not worked together before. Some colleagues are resentful of the placement, and there is some stress between colleagues and volunteer, who tend not to socialise, although the volunteer is seen to have adapted well. The status of the volunteer as a Westerner is seen to be a motivation for the placement in the first place. Changing attitudes is seen to be a major task. Participants do not talk much about resources; funding is seen as unimportant, and the placement is not seen as part of development, or part of improving the situation in any way. In these terms, the placement is seen as quite ineffective. This description is dominated by the problematic **positioning** of volunteer and colleagues. The redistribution of **material resources** is rejected as irrelevant. On the face of it, there is little positive in this description. Jan, the volunteer in the fourth case study in Chapter Five, is most closely correlated with this perspective. In all, five volunteers are represented by this group.

Group 6: Volunteers sensed no widespread support for this placement in the area, and found it hard to adapt to living and working here. The aims of the placement were not clear at the start. Some colleagues are perceived to lack the appropriate skills to participate, and the institution is not well-respected in the area. Two years is not seen to be long enough for lasting change, and the

placement is not seen as part of a wider plan for development in the institution. But there is an attempt to fit practice to local conditions. There is a sense of making some improvement through careful intervention. The placement is seen to be playing a part in development and improving the situation, and in alleviating poverty. The volunteer has friends outside the placement. **Time** and certain features of the locality are highlighted as constraints here, against the emerging sense of purpose which is described. Two volunteers are most closely represented by this description.

Group 7: Cooperation with colleagues is seen as unimportant to volunteers in these placements, along with the volunteer's Westerner status. The volunteer is seen to have appropriate skills to work with colleagues, and found it easy to adapt; colleagues show no resentment but the volunteer does not feel like one of the staff. The volunteer works alone more than colleagues do, and they do not spend much time together outside work. They don't spend much time working at mutual understanding, but colleagues are learning. Tradition is not seen as having much effect on practice. But the placement is having an effect in improving the situation here. Colleagues appear to be **positioned** quite far from the volunteer both professionally and socially. But whilst they do not spend much **time** together, volunteers nevertheless say that there is learning and improvement taking place. Just Phil and Alicia, volunteers in the second and third case studies of Chapter Five, correlated most closely with this perspective.

### A focus on resources

The summaries which result from the quantitative analysis of the Q-sort read rather strangely as accounts of placements, composed as they are of separate statements. Nevertheless, the difference between them is striking: some representations of placements appear to be straightforward and unproblematic for all participants, whilst others draw attention to particular problematic issues. As an example of the former, Group 1 is significant in that it includes colleagues who work in institutions with volunteers who are included in Groups 2 to 7, so that these summaries represent sharply differing accounts of some placements[8] from different perspectives.

For example, to look just at the positioning of volunteer and colleagues in these accounts: in (1), there is no hint, as there is in the others, that the placement is experienced differently by colleagues and volunteers. Or, as in (3), that the volunteer is autonomous in some important way. There is no sense in (1) of the disappointed expectations that appear in (4), or of the strain in the relationships between volunteer and colleagues described in (5). (1) makes no mention, unlike (6),

[8] In completing the Q-sort myself towards the end of this research, it is noticeable that in some respects the set of statements *assumes* the notion of a placement as a real social object, embedded in a wider institutional context and surrounded by a wider context again. It constructs the placement rather in the same way that the volunteer agency forms were seen to do in Chapter Two, rather than problematising the concept of the placement for participants. That nearly all colleagues are part of factor 1 might reflect the way that the placement does *not* exist like this for them. In Chapter 1, colleagues were seen to interpret the placement as meaning the volunteer, who is seen as a temporary member of the institution.

that the experience, although worthwhile, is nonetheless a struggle; or that getting things done is more important than working together (7).

I have indicated in the summary descriptions resulting from the Q-sort that they can be distinguished in terms of the *resources* that appear to be most problematic or salient in the placement. The sensitising concept of 'social resource' is developed here to signify those limited substances or properties, like material resources or the social positioning of an individual, which are necessarily distributed through social interaction. As with the sensitising concepts of the social world adopted in Chapter Two, the concept of the social resource turns out to practically useful for examining learning and other social processes in this context. The social resources which appear to be significant here include time, space, information, social positioning and material resources.

Wallman (1984) makes extensive use of the resource concept to understand how inner city households create and maintain their livelihoods in London. She begins by dividing resources into two groups: the classic set of economic resources (land, labour and capital) are represented in the inner city form of housing, services, money and goods; they are 'not only material, they are structural… together they make up the objective structure of livelihood' (ibid. p.29). Three other resources are the focus of her research: information, time, and identity (ibid. pp.28-29). These 'have more to do with organisation. It is these resources that decide what is done with or within the objective structure…' (ibid. p.29). In Wallman's analysis then, resources are categorised into those tied to objective forms and those related to subjective understanding, but all of them are held together by the concept of the system of resources:

> '… the social system can be visualised in terms of spheres, domains or subsystems - whether of activity, exchange or meaning - to which particular resources or kinds of resources pertain, and between which those resources can be transposed when the right conditions of structure and context apply' (ibid. pp.23-24).

I believe that the processes of distribution of the social resources highlighted through the Q-sort process provide the basis for a framework within which learning in placements can be explored. As with the resources central to the aforementioned study by Wallman (1984), the five social resources identified in this study are utilised for social ends. However, it is not only their use which is of interest; it is also the processes through which they are distributed and structured by individuals and groups. These five resources stand with their feet in the objective world, and their heads in the subjective understanding which is developed through the processes of social transaction. Learning accompanies the distribution and structuring of these resources. I hope to demonstrate this by bringing together some of the themes explored in this chapter, and particularly the notion of accounts.

It was suggested that the biases identified by Chambers (1983) might mark out the dimensions of a learning space. To recap: Chambers identifies bias in the learning of development professionals about the lives of poor people, in terms of place (near to cities or roads); position (in favour of people who are already involved in projects, men rather than women, active and fit rather than apathetic and weak people); time (in favour of the dry season), and information (focusing on the professional's own specialism). These biases correspond to four of the five social resources

identified in the Q-sort descriptions of placements. Chambers shows how the distribution of these resources can significantly affect the learning opportunities of the development professional. By attending to the process of distribution of these resources in similar social contexts, a wider understanding of learning in these contexts can be developed, including an understanding of its continuing effect.

Processes involving the distribution of social resources delineate a powerful framework with which to explore Pratt's (1992) contact zone. Naturalists such as Linneaus and followers mapped a timeless order onto the chaotic places of the world through their benign yet hegemonic search for systematic information about species; Mungo Park, in the heroic tradition, traded and bargained everything including his own body (ibid. p.81) in return for material safety and the account he could write of his positioning at the hands of peoples and places. Stedman's account of his relationship with Joanna, a female slave, is a tale of ownership, of erotic and economic positioning, in which social resources are structured according to what Pratt terms 'the mystique of reciprocity' (ibid. p.97), an ideal which belies the underlying unequal terms of relationship. Female 'exploratresses' meanwhile produced accounts linking processes of personal and political positioning with material resources, for example in the form of clothing; so Tristan sees how women's liberty in Lima is served by the *saya y monto* dress which covers the whole head and body apart from one eye, making it

> 'impossible for the most jealous husband to know his wife when he meets her… no man dare either touch or follow a woman in the street' (ibid. p.168).

Such accounts describe the world in terms of relationships between social resources. The contact perspective draws attention to the way in which interactions in the contact zone influence these distributions of social resources, and the associated accounts. A more ideological perspective would focus on the way in which dominant accounts influence the distribution of social resources through interaction. From both perspectives, social resources occupy a third position alongside the account (which structures those resources, thereby influencing the interaction) and the interaction (through which resources can be redistributed, thereby affecting the account). From either perspective, accounts are far from transparent records of interactions:

> 'People's accounts may conceal their thoughts or motives more than revealing them… Critical theorists … point out that common sense understandings are often employed by people to sustain a social order in which they possess power or control' (McClure 1991, p91-92).

Yet accounts do contain traces of the interactional history which led to their formation. Reconsidering the perception gaps identified by Leach (1991), these can be seen to derive from the different structuring of information about motivation in relation to material resources by two groups of people, a structure that was held in the form of accounts. Central to the Sudanese account was resentment about unequal pay, whilst the expatriate account was of undeserving, lazy indifference. In this context, culture is reduced to the negative account that the expatriates give of the Sudanese.

At this point, the contact perspective focuses our attention on the unseen interactions between Sudanese and expatriate groups through which members of each group have developed the account that they now give. A process of learning has gone on through this interaction, which appears to be intimately bound up with distribution of social resources. In a similar way, the construction of shared agreement in the interaction between Graham and myself was a process of learning: the construction of the meaning of our being male in Indonesia involving the elaboration of information about social norms relating to gender.

The learning process is sometimes the subject of participants' reflections. Jane, a volunteer in Timor became frustrated trying to provoke change in attitudes to gender in 'Tananua', a community development NGO;

> 'it was so obvious to me… that women are (often) forgotten. It was a big challenge. I was aggressive to start with, for me these things are NOT POSSIBLE; I wouldn't understand how they could be so wrong. It took me ages to realise that it would take years' [Jane, T5:78].

Her Indonesian boss also reflected on the process which had ensued:

> '… someone from outside comes in and sees differently, and we have to think how to put the ideas on gender - the theory - into practice… there were collisions... as both sides held their opinions strongly. That needed someone in the middle to control… Development needs the bringing together of inside experience and outsider ideas. What is the point of asking for a volunteer if they didn't work through the difficulties? [Pak Mattheus, Tananua Kupang, April 1998, T6:56].

These complementary perspectives attest to a learning process that I am trying to explore, frame, and understand in this thesis. From the concept of the social world (Chapter Two) emerged the central question of the contribution of learning in the context of difference, in the specific case of volunteering. The theoretical framework identified in this chapter is centred around the notion of learning as a structuring of social resources through interaction. As a theory of practice in the tradition of Bourdieu (1977) and Lave and Wenger (1991), it

> 'emphasises the relational interdependency of agent and world, activity, meaning, cognition, learning, and knowing. It emphasizes the inherently socially negotiated character of meaning and the interested, concerned character of the thought and action of persons-in-activity… objective forms and systems of activity, on the one hand, and agents' subjective and intersubjective understandings of them, on the other, mutually constitute both the world and its experienced forms' (Lave and Wenger 1991, pp.50-51).

Legitimate peripheral participation is an example of learning as a process within a system of activity. For activity theorists, 'contexts are activity systems. An activity system integrates the subject, the object and the instruments (material tools as well as signs and symbols) into a unified whole' (Engestrom 1993, p67). As such, the activity system is an appropriate theoretical context for this research, but its very scope is a limitation on its application: its potential complexity can confuse as much as sensitise the researcher. The more limited social resource framework facilitates both exploration of the data and the development of the framework, whilst retaining the relationship between 'objective forms' and 'subjective understanding': social resources are matters of physical reality, but they are structured by understanding and account.

## A review of the research process

It is helpful to review the research process here. If outcomes can be partially explained through the interaction of individuals in institutions, as accounts are formed and resources distributed, then fieldwork is needed to observe those processes. Assuming a perspective of legitimate peripheral participation, the duration and organisation of data generation had to permit the observation of development cycles, of the development of practitioner identity and of tension between displacement and continuity (Lave and Wenger 1991, p.121). Flows of information between members of the community had to be observed in order to see how they were embedded in existing routines of practice, identities, features of context and artifacts. Practitioners and novices' constructions of those artifacts or material resources had to be sought out. Social positioning in relation to participation had to be accessible to the researcher. Space and place had to be attended to in terms of the opportunities available to participants for informal, peripheral participation.

The first two chapters were principally an account of volunteering from the outside. Social worlds are relatively stable social formations resulting from a process of symbolic interaction; in this account, volunteering was seen to cohere through the commitment of many participants, and through their continual input in defining and redefining core goals and activities. This account provided the beginnings of an explanatory framework for the existence of perception gaps in terms of conflicting commitments and priorities, and the unintended consequences of efforts to maintain these social worlds. It is an account which separates the participants in the volunteer placement by linking their different biographies with larger scale socio-economic and political structures: the commitment to effecting change through volunteering implies a relationship with structures of development, whereas commitment to the maintenance of Indonesian school practice links Indonesian educator colleagues with the ideological structures of the state such as Pancasila, or to religious structures and models. In terms of social resources, their respective social worlds are representations of an initial positioning with respect to the sharing of material resources and information, and in the context of an agreed time frame and geographical relocation.

But as attention moves to processes within the placement, the practice of volunteering appears to be much less coherent than the concept of the social world might imply: for example, there is a lot of variation in the commitment of volunteers to achieving change, both between individuals and over time. When participants in placements were asked to describe their placement using a set of statements from the discourse of volunteering, the representations that they produced differed markedly from each other, suggesting that their experience of volunteer placements was far from homogenous. Individuals move in and out of the social world of volunteering relatively easily, adapting their definition of themselves and shifting their commitment. Profound learning processes appear to be underway in the volunteer placement.

To better explore these processes, I present in the next chapter case studies of four placements which represent the interaction of purpose and meaning in these various contexts. These placements were chosen on the basis of the depth of data available from observation and different participant perspectives; all were current at the time of fieldwork and followed up afterwards

through remote contact. Another criteria was that they were broadly representative of placements in the area concerned: they involve male and female volunteers and colleagues, working in educational and NGO settings. They are used as an empirical testing ground to develop the notion of the structuring of social resources as a process central to learning in the placement. They are written within an activity system perspective, drawing on the work of Lave and Wenger to understand the motivation to learn as associated with the construction of an identity as a member of a community of practice.

I have had conversations over versions of these case studies with supervisors and other critical friends at the university; the participating volunteers and wherever possible the colleagues as well; and returned volunteers who had been working in other countries. This ongoing dialogue has problematised my representation of participants' experience, contradicting and supplementing the original accounts.

# Chapter Five: Case Studies of Volunteer Placements

In the first four chapters, volunteering in Indonesia has been discussed in terms of the encounter between participants of different social worlds, and the learning that is involved in this encounter. The four case studies in this chapter describe some of the processes by which volunteers and their colleagues deal with the extraordinary context of their placements, and show how participants' perspectives of themselves, others and their context change. Each is a partially negotiated textual representation, struggled over with those involved; each represents an unfinished but documented process (MacLure 1994). These studies create a space, a construction of reality which draws together various people's perspectives, sometimes contradictory, in which the role and effect of learning can be analysed.

## Case studies to develop theory

The case studies are used as an opportunity to elaborate the resource framework developed in Chapter Four in relation to learning. A discussion of the studies as accounts which describe the structuring of social resources follows each study. It is clear that no single participant's purpose is wholly definitive of subsequent events; indeed a common feature of these placements is their unpredictability, which is reflected in the story-like structure of these accounts.

The 'distribution of resources' describes a set of processes which constitute the contingencies of the placement. Whilst the various participants in volunteer placements have different agendas, they all have an interest in 'getting things done' (Strauss 1978, p.ix). Where resources are limited, the realisation of people's intentions necessarily involves other participants. Raw social resources including time, space, material resources, information, and social positioning are indeed limited; they have to be distributed, and that involves a social process of some kind:

> '… when individuals or groups or organisations of any size work together to "get things done" then agreement is required about such matters as *what*, *how*, *when*, *where* and *how much* ' (Strauss 1978, p.ix, my italics).

For example, the allocation of time to different activities, either in planning or in practice, is necessarily done by individuals and with reference to others. This distribution can be established through a variety of processes: 'persuading, educating, manipulating, appealing to rules or to authority, and coercion' (Strauss 1978, p.x), and the subject of his book, negotiation. Strauss contends that each of these processes contributes to the establishment of a social order of a particular kind, and this is something that will be pursued in Chapter Six. For example, the process of negotiation, unlike coercion or manipulation, is an interpretive process that necessitates the valuation and exchange of these social resources.

To propose, as I do, that this resource framework makes the process of learning visible in the complex experience of volunteer placements, is to suggest as much about the nature of learning as about the processes of volunteering. Firstly, the distribution of raw social resources sets limits to the learning process: social position, time, material, space and information, both their own and others, determine what learning is available to participants in a social process. But the structuring and restructuring of social resources involves a learning process. If cognitive learning is the

structuring of knowledge from information, a wider concept of learning could involve the structuring of time, material resources, space and social positioning.

This structuring process is influenced by the objective world of physical reality, but also by the accounts and stories which represent the existing knowledge and ways of knowing of the group or individual concerned. Since volunteering is not an established practice with agreed aims and methods, volunteers' and colleagues' accounts have a lot of work to do to maintain order in the placement. This work is visible in the diaries that volunteers keep, in letters to friends and relations, and in their reports to volunteer agencies, which were drawn upon to form the case studies.

## An introduction to the case studies

These particular placements are the subject of case studies for several reasons. All four were current at the time of fieldwork in early 1998, and were the subject of repeated visits and subsequent correspondence. They have been constructed using oral and textual accounts from the viewpoint of several significant actors. These studies include male and female volunteers and colleagues in various institutional and professional contexts. The placements differ too in the level of participation and collaboration between volunteer and colleagues.

The detail of these accounts is an attempt to convey the unique experience of being in each placement. As suggested by the account which follows each case study, it is not the comparison of these studies here which is significant, so much as the opportunity they each present to explore the range of possible processes in and outcomes from volunteer placements.

The first study deals primarily with the interaction between institutional needs and personal expectations in the early stages of an ELT placement. The volunteer is an experienced deputy headteacher working outside the UK for the first time; the school has have never before hosted a volunteer. The placement was still ongoing in March 2000.

The second account describes the encounter between a volunteer science teacher and his colleagues in a high school in Larantuka, East Flores. At the time of fieldwork, the volunteer had been in post for eighteen months, and he left six months later. The construction of a stable set of relationships and placement activities was problematic, and the issue of sustainability is never far from sight.

The third placement takes place in a much smaller institution, an NGO working in the area of housing and environment. Issues of difference acquired particular meaning where a previous volunteer had played an important development role. The case study develops some sense of the dynamics of participation.

The fourth placement had practically finished at the time of the visit, and provides a contrast in many ways. The role of the volunteer was to facilitate a network between NGOs, and this proved very difficult.

## Case Study I: Expectations of an English Teacher

This placement is based at Dola Monastery High School in Ende, on the island of Flores. The volunteer is David Jones, age group 46-55, a retired deputy head teacher from the North of England; key colleagues are the head teachers Frater Robert and Frater Yanuarius. The volunteer's job title is English language teacher/trainer. The placement started in November 1997 and was visited five months later from 2nd to 4th March 1998, and again on 10th April 1998.

Photo 1: The new gateway for Dola High School

## The context and aims of the placement

Dola Monastery High School in Flores is situated on the edge of the town of Ende, near a small bus terminal on the coast. It is a flourishing establishment, run by Catholic brothers, comprising junior and senior high schools and associated boarding accommodation. The shaded, ceramic-tiled living quarters of the religious community face the school entrance behind a neatly planted terrace. Inside, a satellite TV brings Indonesian news, with the sound of the sea in the background.

Frater Yanuarius is the head of the junior high school here, with 650 students and three English teachers; enthusiastically managing his part of the school with apparent flair whilst studying for a university degree. Frater Robert is the head of the senior high school, with 530 students and two English teachers; slightly older than his fellow brothers, he carries authority with a genial, thoughtful demeanor, pausing easily in conversation to consider and respond.

David the volunteer is older again. First impressions are of a deliberate, almost ponderous communication style, which obscures a dry and ready wit. Of himself he speaks carefully, revealing parts of his life with dignity. For David, volunteering is firstly an exciting opportunity towards the end of his career, tailored to fit him as a bachelor:

> 'My mother died two years ago, therefore I don't have commitments…' As deputy head in a Catholic comprehensive school in Rochdale, it had been easy to identify continuities with Catholic Flores: 'It's a Catholic environment anyway… I would probably find a lot of the

festivals and the way of life of the people very similar… living in a Muslim community would give me a wider insight… I don't know much about cultures other than England and Catholicism' [August 1997, EL16:65-66].

Another of David's expectations in the UK had been that educational standards might be higher in Flores:

'The one thing I'm bothered about there is I don't want the people out there to think that I'm teaching their grandmother to suck eggs… whereas our most able children are as good as anything within the Pacific Rim, the problem is we have a long tail' [EL16:47].

In particular, he found that his title "English language upgrader"

'... puts me under a certain amount of pressure, because my background has not been specifically as a teacher of English, therefore, I need to rapidly get together as much information as I can with regard to the four skills, of reading, writing speaking and listening' [EL16:14].

The volunteer agency's placement description specifies the professional objectives and context of this placement:

'to upgrade both English language and teaching methodology skills of teachers at Dola Junior and Senior High Schools, and to upgrade English language skills of students at these schools. Primary education has recently been made compulsory for nine years, and local English teachers are unprepared for the demands of the new curriculum (1994) which differs considerably from the previous one, and requires teaching skills and methodology which the teachers have never encountered before' [May 1997, EL1:11].

'Flores is an island which receives relatively little support in terms of professional upgrading for English teachers, compared to the more central islands such as Java and Sumatera'.

The agency's hope is that a well-placed volunteer could help to fill this gap. They would

'Teach about 12 English lessons a week… Team teach with other teachers at the host schools, and other middle school and high schools in the area. Run in-service upgrading courses for middle school/ high school English teachers. Work with teachers at host schools and in other local schools on producing and using suitable materials to supplement the curriculum' [May 1997, EL1:16].

Through dialogue and observation it becomes clear that Dola High School is an ambitious institution, involving a volunteer for slightly different purposes. Students taught by a native speaker will tell their parents about it, raising the status of the school in the local community. The brothers treated David as a teacher. He was disappointed at their approach to him:

'I thought I'd be here and they would sit me down with a list of objectives and we would work through a plan together... but nothing like that… What they wanted was a native speaker - and it's so inefficient... I thought if I can record tapes, that'll be that in twelve months' time. But there isn't even I working microphone here'.

Several months later he came to realise that there was more to his presence than his technical skill:

'It dawned on me that it is a status symbol to have a native speaker around, I only just realised that'.

It seemed that mutual confidence had been developing slowly, allowing different activities to start between people here. My impression in March 1998, after five months, is that the brothers are fond of David, although still finding him difficult to understand. They call him 'The Archbishop', which

seems like a respectful jest at his age and colour in a context which still locates the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy in The Netherlands. They recognised and appreciated his efforts:

> 'In his association with teachers, he has so much experience as a deputy head-teacher, so that he really understands how to be with teachers. And he is very communicative… he really likes to talk with other teachers in the school, and the teachers want to learn from him. One or two words or sentences they can learn from him, they like that very much. And also with the students. They are really learning… they are really happy with that way of working. They really know how it should sound, and how to phrase things. Indonesian teachers of English often teach only the theory, whereas with David they learn the language directly' [Frater Yanuarius, April 1998, EL2:20].

David is working very hard. On one of the pre-departure volunteer agency training courses in Birmingham David had told me that 'In the blurb it does say that one should resist any pressure to teach more than agreed amount. And it's been said here on this course that learning to say no is a… crucial skill, and it's something one should do at the beginning, not at the end… that may be problematic initially'. So it proved. David looked very tired; he is teaching six days a week, morning and afternoon, as well as three evening classes a week for the staff. 'But I'm not doing any more than the teachers here, so it's hard to complain'… 'the amount of time they give to the students, it's amazing. I think we're about at the limit. But the equipment is poor, you should see the quality of exam papers'.

The house where the Brothers live is the informal centre of the school; and they are very welcoming, even though language is a daily constraint on communication:

> '"There is widespread support here for this kind of placement" (48). We see this support from the organisation, from the brothers here... so that for any volunteer that comes, we make a lot of effort to arrange things as well as possible. That is our contribution. And for instance we are very happy if other friends of his, from the volunteer agency, come and visit, so that he has some entertainment; that's something we're glad to do'.

Having been an acting headteacher in the UK prior to the placement, David is comfortable with this informal association with the school leadership. Possibilities are shaped here, as David is drawn into an institutional perspective. The 1992 earthquake had destroyed some school buildings and they are still reconstructing; as a Westerner, David has been seen as a potential gateway to funding. Already David had been drawn into preparing funding proposals, and is carefully completing his second, for books and printing facilities. The first, for an English centre, had been rejected.

> 'I'll be very disappointed if we don't get this, very disappointed: it takes a lot of time putting these proposals together.... and the school needs it. I think if we get this it'll set them on track, make a huge difference' [David, March 1998, EL1:58].

But one Brother in particular saw that David might also be able to institute new practice in language learning:

> 'The volunteer is a foreign expert, and if we had to pay for that, for someone to work here, and sort out all the regulations'… 'In the high school there is already a language lab. So that with the presence of the volunteer, there can be a contribution to methods of using the equipment there, which so far hasn't been used at all. Then, that can be learnt by the teachers, and the students, so that after the volunteer has gone, that can carry on' [Frater Yanuarius, April 1998, EL2 : 100-101].

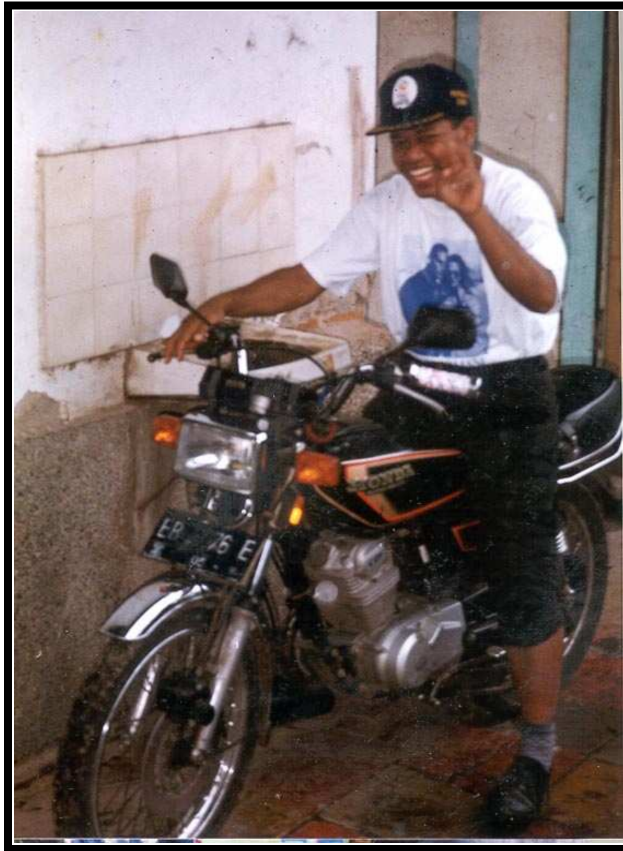

Photo 2: Frater Yanuarius and motorbike

Despite their different perceptions of David's role, volunteer and institution were comfortable at this early stage that the placement should be located purely within the school. David's motorbike is an artifact exemplifying this agreement. Whereas the placement description suggests that 'the volunteer will definitely need a motorcycle in Ende… (for) visiting many schools in outlying areas', David had ridden his bike only once; it had been four months before he met the other volunteer in town. The brothers are are protective of him: 'He's old, so he doesn't get about much, his bike stays in nearly all the time.' There is no conflict of interest between volunteer and colleagues when David's bike stays in the shed.

As a teacher, David is very assured, with no need to impress. He sets a measured pace, and is unfailingly polite, never putting students down, always encouraging. He can be very funny, with mimes, drawings, playing gently on students' best efforts. His lessons gather pace and reach a conclusion, all except the last one I observed, which dragged to a close in the heat of the day. We discuss how inappropriate some of the material in the books seems to be; but public exam questions are similarly abstract. David enjoys these lessons; making it fun helps in getting through what is a long day (both for himself and the kids).

Photo 3: David in Dola High School Class 2, Tuesday 3rd March, 1998

Photo 4: Preparing for a school retreat, Thursday 18th March, 1998

David likens the atmosphere in the school to that of a good comprehensive, or a grammar school; he comments particularly on the music playing as students arrive in the morning. Much of this is down to the leadership for him: 'I think that in England they would be running a very good school.' Preparing to accompany a residential trip for all the thirteen year olds, David is enthusiastic about the education that students were taking part in; he felt that the school sets a value on learning to take a place in the community, not just on learning the subject content of the curriculum. The organisation of this trip is impressive: a convoy of seven buses leaves the school drive, over one hundred students each with a seat, neatly drawn banners attached announcing the purpose in journeying four hours through the mountains for a retreat. Each of these details is indicative of the

power of this institution to define normality and therefore to disrupt other's expectations and habits.

## Surprise - learning about assumptions

First impressions of David can be misleading. Before he left for Indonesia I was concerned that he would be rather inflexible, and find it difficult to cope with the changes he would face. In fact, he seemed to be steadily meeting the challenges that the experience presented. The brothers revealed some of their mistaken assumptions, related to his age:

> 'I have to acknowledge, Pak David... a person as old as he is, already a good age, but in the area of enthusiasm for work, extraordinary. Whether you think of school activities, or extra-curricular ones... Even if only one student turns up, he teaches the lesson… our habit here is that if only one student comes, we send them home, and then are angry with the others later. But David is very rarely angry'. [Frater Yanuarius, April, 1998, EL2:58].

Some of Frater Yanuarius' assumptions about David may derive from his rather contrasting characterisation of the religious community at Dola:

> 'One thing about this community is that *everyone is young*. Even the leader, he's not that much older, not a different generation, but roughly of an age. Then secondly, there is an openness. *If someone is angry, then they are angry*. Then thirdly, this community is a working community, and a community of students. So that we are busy with events in the biara, but also in studying, at school... so that between practical and spiritual, going together' [Frater Yanuarius, April 1998, EL2:70].

David is atypical in terms of several characteristics. So his colleagues were surprised when, after an outbreak of rioting, David went to take photographs in town with Frater Robert. His attitude to learning has also been noted:

> 'I think that he is learning a lot.. bearing in mind his background, and experience, he came here to Indonesia, he went to Yogya to learn Indonesian for just two months, then came here. And was extremely disciplined, and diligent. Wanted to learn about the situation here; learned to place himself in relation to the other teachers, and among the students. He has been learning a lot from them, about culture and the language' [Frater Yanuarius, April 1998, EL2:85].

For Frater Yanuarius, David's attitude to learning is closely related to his ability to adapt:

> 'He has adapted. He came with the attitude that he wanted to learn. And with that desire to learn, he tried to adapt himself to the situation, in his relationships with the fraters who live with him in the community, then with the situation at the school, with the teachers and with the students. And I see that he has already succeeded partly in adapting to these things [Frater Yanuarius, April 1998, EL2:88].
>
> 'A practical example, would be to do with food. I see that most Westerners who come here, they have to eat Western food. Pak David not: he says, 'lunchtime I eat rice, in the evening too I eat rice'. And only in the morning does he have bread. Then, once we were invited to a party... the teachers together.. he came, and we drank palm wine together, and distilled wine... Whatever food was there, he ate as well… Then, on the question of religion. I didn't think that Westerners would want to join in with the prayers. But he does… And then in the life of the school, in relating to the teachers, and students, also a lot of adapting' [Frater Yanuarius, April 1998, EL2:90].

David's experience of adaptation has been rather different. It has included a moment of crisis:

> 'I came with a slightly superior attitude which by Christmas had been replaced by the realisation that "we could learn something here"; I think the lowest point for me was 1st December, when I sat down here (in the wonderfully spacious and cool common room of the brother's asrama) and thought we can't go on for two years like this, not communicating. It was impossible, and I thought, I'm going to ask, what is going on'.

At this stage, David was getting little information from his colleagues; they were just being polite. David made that a turning point, after which his relationships with the brothers grew closer through conversations and questions:

> 'In fact I often spend time with Pak David. We live together in this community, and if Pak David has any difficulty, he often asks me. And also from me; sometimes I suggest things that he might help with'. (Frater Yanuarius, April 1998)

Perhaps David has come to terms with not being fully integrated with the brothers; with what is and is not possible. There is a measure of acceptance in David's tone here:

> 'The one word that would be the watchword for people coming here to Indonesia that I would use would be 'sendiri' [alone]. You have to be ready for that, and it's hard to cope with. I think everybody finds that at times, you would know yourself… you find out what is really important and what doesn't matter at all'.

This linking of difficult personal experience with a discovery of important truths could be a religious perspective. As David said, 'I've done a lot of thinking about the existence of God here'.

### Difficulties with collaboration

Upgrading one's skills may seem an attractive idea to Indonesian teachers in an abstract context, but it is considerably different to be faced with a fluent English speaker, a stranger whose practice implies that you have been doing it wrong. Frater Yanuarius is clear about the difficulty of working as an effective teacher alongside other teachers who have been doing something different all their working lives, in the absence of a developing relationship with them:

> 'In the middle school, teachers don't fully accept the method that he is trying to demonstrate. For instance, he said to me, 'Frater, could you possibly arrange for me to have a large tape recorder in class 1?' A kind of extra lesson of English: he would speak, the children would listen. Then he would play the cassette, they would hear it again… and repeat. But the outcome: other teachers of English didn't really like that way. So that the co-operation, the working together with teachers - not from Pak David's side you understand - it's not so effective as it could be'.
>
> Andy: So you mean.... In fact you mean that Pak David is more effective, but there is a problem in them working together.
>
> F. Frater Yanuarius: Yeah, that's right. He is more effective than these colleagues. Yeah. ..."Some of my colleagues resent the disturbance caused by this placement" (13). Yeah. I put this at -2. ... An example, from the middle school: the teachers of English. They certainly feel that all this time they have been teaching wrongly in some way, with Pak David being here. You can see that, in that really they ought to be going together into classes with Pak David; they should be sitting watching at the back, while Pak David is teaching at the front. But usually Pak David is teaching alone. So my impression is that they don't like it… There is one great teacher in the middle school, one woman teacher, Ibu L, she does go into the class with him. But the she has excellent English. The other teachers, they don't'.

It seems that Frater Yanuarius has recognised the threat of a good example, and he has a proposal ready: a meeting of all the English teachers to talk about their experience of working together. The new practice that David presents is a barrier to his participation with most of the other teachers. Ironically, David has much less experience of English teaching than his colleagues. It may be that he finds it difficult to appraise their existing practice in the terms of his own newly learnt ELT methodology, so that the difference between their practice and his appears polarised to him.

Later still, in a letter, it seemed that David had used my visit partly to explore the idea of becoming more critical with respect to the practice he saw around him. The trappings of hospitality, the desire to meet expectations and to fit into the community, and the sense of amazement at what exists in this still-exotic setting all mitigate against a critical stance. As a visitor from home, I provide the chance to see the situation afresh:

> 'Your time in Dola was extremely helpful to me. Quite apart from the welcome opportunity to speak fluently in English, you gave me a very clear insight into many aspects of life and culture here as well as outlining the ethos of the volunteer agency. I now have a different perspective of my role here' [David, EL14:9].

When I returned to David's post after two weeks he had decided not to worry about finishing the curriculum: it seemed to him more important that the students enjoyed and got something from the lesson. It felt like part of the slow process of making personal sense in a situation demanding compromise and second-best choices. Having seen David coming to terms with his relationships, and colleagues coming to understand the possibilities and the difficulties of working with him, I felt that this placement had the potential to develop into a real partnership.

### A focus on social resources and learning

Discussion of the case study is an opportunity to develop the theoretical framework regarding the distribution and structuring of social resources as a means of focusing on learning. Here I draw on the case study itself, but also on follow-up interviews and letters with participants. Without labouring the focus on social resources in what follows, it is their distribution and structuring that provide the framework for the analysis of processes in the placement.

By presenting the case study to participants, I extended the dialogue that we had begun during fieldwork. David used the case study as a reference point from which to measure change a year later:

> 'I do think that the sort of atmosphere that I'm now working in is substantially different from the one when you first visited. Now it may be that you wish to contrast, I'm not making an argument for scrapping that, all I'm saying is that I think things have moved on' [EL30:117]

This analysis provides one reading of the changes to which David refers here. If we go back to consider the initial distribution of resources, the volunteer was positioned as a guest, and allocated a room at the heart of the institution, eating all his meals with the school leadership. The main social resources involved in social processes in the placement were the volunteer's time in relation to positioning.

Contests over the time that volunteer teachers spend teaching in classrooms have occurred in other educational placements. David's placement description specified very clearly the amount of teaching involved, but for the first year of his placement, David was teaching much more than that specified amount.

In his response to the case study, written in May 1999, the headteacher of the high school represents the time that David spends teaching as a very salient figure:

> 'I as headteacher am already very happy, as are the teachers of the school, because we have got a foreign teacher and native speaker… According to our opinion, David is a volunteer who likes to work hard and is very disciplined ' [EL21:11].

For Frater Robert, the time that David spends teaching is a fundamental feature of his participation in school practice, such that he positions David as *their* 'foreign teacher and native speaker', but he remains silent on how agreement is reached. Frater Yanuarius explains the importance of David's teaching in terms of a process of poverty reduction:

> '… this is in fact a kind of first stage… in the way Pak David teaches, that is certainly going to influence the students who are really disciplined in learning English, so that they can create some work, and that will have the effect of alleviating poverty' [EL2:80].

It is not that Frater Robert coerced David into doing what he wanted early in the placement: but it was an easy negotiation. David wanted to fit into the heart of the institution; the case study describes how he quickly agreed to help the Head with funding applications, and how he felt the need to show similar commitment to the school as those around him. Even so, this distribution of his time resulted in a lot of learning, where learning is the structuring of social resources. David spoke of a crisis early on, realising that he has given his time without any change in his position. He felt that he was being used as little more than a tape recording machine, only later understanding the status that the school derived from his position. The Q sort gave him a chance to reflect further, and he saw the exercise as potentially useful for avoiding future crisis:

> 'The survey… provided a focus for me to evaluate what is going on here and what contribution I might have made already or in the future. It is also a model for future meetings that I might initiate, if from time to time I think it necessary to bring things "back on course"' [letter, April 1998, EL14:1-23].

Interestingly, the significant differences between the Q sorts produced by David and Frater Yanuarius all concerned the positioning of David. Frater Yanuarius reports David as being busier outside work, working alone and being ill more often, being more openly critical and in some ways less effective than does David himself (see Appendix III, Table 3).

But David's accommodation to the needs of the school continued until the intervention of the volunteer programme officer, who insisted that volunteer time was a limited and valuable resource:

> 'In November 1998…Roger [volunteer program officer] came… and made it clear that he wasn't happy with how things had been implemented, cos it didn't follow the spirit of what.. had been agreed' [David, EL30:157].

Central to the placement as the programme officer imagined it was collaboration between the volunteer and other teachers, and this was not happening. Consequently, he coerced the headteachers by threatening that the placement might not be renewed unless David's time was

distributed more in accordance with the original plans of the agency and school. They agreed that David would work in the school from Monday to Thursday, and spend two days working on teacher upgrading activities. This he did, starting with a series of meetings to advertise his presence; teaming up with an Australian volunteer English teacher Inggrid (who had been in the same town for nearly a year without them having met), and working with teachers from a range of schools to 'identify their needs'.

But 'teacher upgrading' at Dola was still problematic. The case study told how Frater Yanuarius assumed that teachers at his school were unwilling to collaborate with David because they were ignorant of English teaching practice. Reflecting a year later on the case study, Frater Yanuarius was able to be frank about early difficulties in a way that is rare for Indonesians:

> 'Really! It has to be admitted as the truth, that in the first months that Pak David was in the middle school, many problems and difficulties were experienced: there was yet no mutual commitment between Pak David with the teachers who teach English at the school regarding the materials, methodology, and the systems being used…' [Frater Yanuarius, reflections on the case study, May 1999, EL21:28].

Frater Yanuarius describes at length the attempt to negotiate a closer involvement with the other teachers in the school, and demonstrates his commitment to the process with the materials he has bought:

> 'With these difficulties that Pak David faced, he took the initiative to arrange a meeting… In this meeting we made a mutual commitment regarding materials, meaning grammar, songs, vocabulary, verbs, the utilisation of pictures and giving meaning; about methodology - dialogue, pronunciation practice, vocabulary, idioms, dramatisation, short activities like crosswords and drawings. From the school's side [I myself] have already obtained dictionaries with 3000000 words, 100 copies….' [Frater Yanuarius, reflections on case study, May 1999, EL21:36].

For David, memory of the meeting was obscured by its disappointing outcome:

> 'We did have that meeting. Very little has developed since then, except that they now specify to me, precisely, cos I've insisted on this, I want to know week by week what it is you want me to do, so that when we come to … each end of term exam I want to know before we begin, what it is we wish to teach. Ideally, I would like to see the objectives set out. But they feel that if I can assist with dialogue, that is where they see my role as being most important' [EL30:15].

Attempts at negotiation had failed. During a regional conference of English teaching volunteers and colleagues in March 1999, David shared with other volunteers his experience of failing to position his colleagues as team teachers with him, and they appear to have agreed that such difficulty is not unusual; an Indonesian counterpart who reported a different story was revealed as having 'fervently' exaggerated:

> 'I've asked about team teaching, and I think the phrase is, there are various ways of saying no. That has yet to happen… And that is the experience I think of most volunteers… one counterpart fervently assured the [Kupang conference of English teachers] that this was done, in fact it occurred on three occasions, it was very very rare, and there was reluctance… they probably feel inferior. And one has to be very careful, because you're in the business of building up… one has to weigh that very carefully. I've dropped the idea now. They know that if they wanted to come in they'd be very welcome. Usually they're too busy' [EL30:23 ].

In this way, David strengthened his deficit model of Indonesian teachers of English in general ('they probably feel inferior') and constructed a culture of difference:

> 'I think there will always be a distance, perhaps from culture, perhaps from the fact that they perceive me as a native speaker and therefore more proficient in the language than they are' [EL30:11].

There are other ways in which this sense of difference is produced and strengthened. In the absence of much information about how he is positioned, David reflects on the physical position he is accorded on different occasions. He veils his lack of understanding with a sense of paradox and mystery:

> 'I do feel that the Westerner is still seen as somebody superior, whether that's because it's a legacy of the colonial days, which would seem paradoxical, whether it's because we're perceived as much richer economically, I'm not sure… I have been paraded on two occasions, in gathering of parents… 'this is Pak David from England'. And that is clearly a marketing ploy for the school. At first I was taken aback by that, but now I accept that… The other thing is first of all my position at the dining table in the biara, positioned next to where the head sits in the staffroom, for full meetings. ... Now that still remains a mystery to me… Part of it is probably age. Seniority, you get respect, that's automatic. But there is a sort of excessive deference. I think they are naturally respectful. Um, amongst themselves and to each other, which is desirable… I wouldn't say there's a barrier between me and them, but I do think there's the fact that I'm from a place like England, and I've come from some distance to teach English, and I do think they still stand me in awe. I'm puzzled by that' [EL30: 72-74 ].

David understands that his place is arranged on formal occasions to accord him status: in front of parents and staff this status reflects on the school, whereas in the more private context of mealtimes it is a question of showing respect to him. But David does not understand their deference: their positioning of him is mysterious, paradoxical and puzzling, and he need take no responsibility for it. After all, his colleagues are at home in a context which he finds extraordinary, and which also impinges on the mysteries of life (and death):

> 'I've heard the expression 'in your face'. It's not an expression I would normally use. But I can begin to understand what it means. There's no way of avoiding the reality of the situation… in the West is that we're isolated from the reality of things, just because of the way the economy's developed, and division of labour. We can collect food from a supermarket. Transport is relatively simple. Medical facilities are available… in the north of England living in an urban environment we're not immediately looking at a profusion of plants and trees and so on. They're there, but they don't immediately impinge on our lives, unless we're in a job which is connected to that.
>
> But out there… the fecundity of animal and plant life is enormous. I think the colour, in nature in flowers, animals, insects, is absolutely… awe inspiring. And living on an island where you've got 14 active volcanoes, occasional earth tremors, frequent thunder, you see the waves, fisherman going out battling against the waves, being very careful, even going at night with lanterns, people living off the farms, and bringing their wares to sell; two or three times a week, a boy at seven o'clock in the morning outside the biara, ready to sell fish, freshly caught fish to the kitchen. Um there is.. and then of course death. This business of the child that died. Um. The funeral of Michael Ngadi the administrative officer. The nailing down of the coffin lid. The communal element in the funeral' [Manchester, June 1999, EL30:85-86].

David powerfully communicates his sense of difference by contrasting the distribution of social resources in Indonesia and 'the West'. He has been successful in two funding proposals for

assistance: for the lining of six wells in a nearby village, and for mobility aids for some disabled people in the local community. This has, he feels, improved local perceptions of the placement, whilst he himself is becoming more aware of the different material reality in which his colleagues live, which contributes to his respect for the strength of their faith and community:

> 'Another thing which astounded me was when I was invited to a home by one of the teachers, I went at the Sunday lunchtime, they offered me rice and so on. But when I went into the man's house, it was rented, he didn't own it; bamboo framed; I suppose you'd call it a kind of wickerwork wall. But the wallpaper was made up from empty sacks from the Kupang cement company, stuck together. I can only assume that one of the reasons for that was to ensure privacy perhaps for members of the family in the next room… That kind of detail brought home to me the level at which they exist in material terms. In terms of their respect for people, their commitment to the children, the strength of their religious faith and this does not just apply to the Catholic community, the Muslim community is very strong, there are some Hindus as well, in Ende… despite all of those difficulties their faith is very very strong. And that's impressed me' [EL30:102].

It is legitimate to contrast this sense of otherness with the control that David began to assume in respect of the teaching of English, as he and Inggrid planned their Saturday morning workshops. In this arena David becomes the agent of change:

> 'If I say how do you teach grammar in a particular class, when several of the children are of limited ability, I will get a general response, "Oh, you use easier methods". But you try and elucidate what the easier methods are. I'm hoping that through this joint program of ways in which we can improve the methodology, and by giving them access to materials, I'm hoping that that will persuade them to try new ideas. There isn't time for preparation, as much as I would like. So I think for them to take it up, it has to be seen as something being of immediate relevance' [EL30:9].

David had observed that teachers never shared information on their practice, either with him or with each other. But he is not concerned to seek an explanation for this. Through the workshop, information about teaching English became valuable knowledge which David was able to distribute and thereby position himself as central to the teachers who had earlier kept him on the periphery. David reflected on his new position:

> 'Certainly where you've got an outsider coming in, and particularly where they can put some resources into it, and extend an invitation, to join a team… that does seem to be something that can cut through reluctance and past experience. I must say I've generally found teachers very willing to come and take part' [EL30:56].

The workshops became central to David's construction of the placement, in terms of information and positioning, and time: Saturday became 'sacrosanct', while David bargained with Fridays:

> '… what I do now is to say no, I'm sorry, I can't do it for the whole of the morning, I've got to get these other things ready, this is a priority, this is what's expected of me, once I've done that, yes. Then I can help you out. And I would stick to that now…. Perhaps I'm a bit harder now, than I would have been initially' [EL30:156].

The distribution of David's time has hardly changed, but its structure is different: it is now the subject of generous offer and grateful acceptance rather than the assumption of duty. As time is distributed in practice, it becomes explicitly linked to other social resources, which all become more determined and structured concepts for participants. Frater Robert links David's structuring of time to his position: he

> '… is ready at all times if his help is asked for. David's character: disciplined, joyful, likes to make fun, likes to work hard throughout the day, always ready to help anyone, both within and outside the school' [EL21:11].

Quite independently, David surmised that it was his 'willingness to assist' which was most salient to his positioning by colleagues:

> 'I think that the key thing that they're looking for with volunteers is willingness to assist the community. I do think that that is a key element. It doesn't matter what the specialism is, it's the willingness of that person to assist. And to support the work of the community. If they're prepared to do that, I think that is seen as a very big plus' [EL30:175].

Having given up trying to work closely with his colleagues in the classroom, David reports on negotiations to enable those teachers to be involved in his new workshops:

> 'Frater Robert has agreed in the high school, and Frater Yanuarius has agreed in the middle school, though it hasn't happened in either school yet… that all three teachers in each school, a total of six, are present at these Saturday morning workshops. Because I hope that that would stimulate some discussion between themselves. At the moment they appear to work in isolation' [EL30:9].

Frater Yanuarius could envisage the development of teachers' practice only in terms of using the language laboratory. A year later he was aware of the workshops that David was starting (and neatly uses the venues to position his school on a par with the long-established and highly prestigious Catholic high school across town, where Inggrid is based):

> 'He also invites other schools in the town of Ende so that once a month there is a meeting with other teachers who teach English in the town. There are about 20 teachers in this group. These meetings take place in two places, the language labs in Syuradikara High School and Dola High School' [Frater Yanurius, EL21:25].

All participants seem to have re-evaluated their material resources. Where David was earlier happy to help with funding applications for resource rooms, he reflected ironically eighteen months' later on his discovery that the beautiful and elaborate language lab 'didn't work. There was some fault on the machine, it did not work…. Teachers don't use it, they've never attempted to use it. Roger Green's experience is that he knows of several schools with language labs that they never use' [EL30:221]. David had learnt that the value of the language laboratory to the school does not depend on its use, and he stresses his realisation by repetition: 'It did not work… they don't use it'. Through reference to other volunteers, this is constructed as normal. Meanwhile, Frater Robert was sufficiently impressed with how David 'has helped the school by buying some English dictionaries' [Robert, EL21:11] to arrange the construction of

> 'two long containers… with 25 dictionaries in each… you will see these being carried around the school now, and the two other teachers of English do use them. They will send for them at the start of a lesson' [David, EL30:17].

The processes of negotiation and coercion had an effect: David, the outsider from a far country, has been repositioned from peripheral teacher to co-leader of well-attended workshops and respected colleague. In June 1999, both David and Frater Yanuarius sounded upbeat:

> '… things have moved on.. first of all in that the original aims of VSO's placement for a volunteer… are being more closely followed; and secondly I think that by responding to the needs of the community that have been put to me, there's been more of an impetus to

> my presence there, as though the results now are starting to come through… It's been a significant shift in my daily routine, and in what has tangibly, palpably come from the time that I've been there… it's taken 20 months... And that's a further reason why I think an extension would be sensible' [David, EL30:117].
>
> '…. And Frater Yanuarius[9] is sure that in the new school year that is coming, everything is going to go very well, because we have looked together for the best solutions to the problems at the school' [Frater Yanuarius, reflections on the case study, May 1999, EL21:41].

In Chapter Two I described the potential tension in legitimating the placement, where the volunteering world looks for change whilst the host institution hopes for participation. Up to a point, David and Frater Yanuarius agree that progress has been made, but for David this is because he has brought under his control one process in a context which he has learnt to see as one of difference and mystery, while Frater Yanuarius emphasises the process of cooperation and looks ahead for more. Where for David dictionaries can help teachers to change their practice, to Frater Yanuarius they signify his support for David; where David perceives a 'significant shift' in his daily routine, Frater Yanuarius and Bernard still stress the hours he is working in the school.

## Case Study II: Stability and Sustainability

This placement is based at Aru Catholic High School in Larantuka, on the island of Flores. The volunteer is Phil James, age group 26-35, a science teacher from Milton Keynes; his key colleague is Ibu Elin, a physics teacher. The volunteer's job title is science teacher and upgrader. The placement started in November 1996 and was visited after sixteen months 7th -9th March 1998, and 3rd - 6th April 1998.

I begin this case study with a short reflection on my own arrival in Larantuka during the field research, to suggest the context of data generation.

*My journey to this placement gives me the opportunity to reflect on how strange it was for Phil to arrive here as a physics teacher from Milton Keynes, or for a prospective colleague to greet his arrival. Four sleepy hours from the bustling little town of Maumere, it is Saturday afternoon as the bus rounds the last bends above the sea and the first buildings of Larantuka appear in the distance. A small town stretched out and wrapped around the last volcano of East Flores; this is postcard coastal mountain scenery. Mangrove forest dominates the coast.*

*Ten minutes later the bus drops me below the high school gates which frown across the road towards the sea. I seek directions from some teenage lads who emanate an air of ownership. 'Oh yes, Pak Phil, he is our teacher'; they guide me up a track, through a lockable gate to a smart whitewashed house in its own walled compound. A trials motorbike leans near the door. A sleepy voice from within in Indonesian: "Who is it?", then Phil appears at the doorway in a towel and sandals to greet this visitor and entourage. Younger than me, fresh-faced but with less hair. A little banter, then he invites me in.*

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[9] Names are often used instead of 'I' in Indonesia.

*Later that first afternoon, holding on to the back of Phil's Yamaha as we twist our way from town, I wonder if he is becoming Indonesian, so sparing and late he is in sharing his plans. It turns out that we are going swimming in some hot springs; near the beach, we slip down the soft muddy bank into the river. I contrive to float on my back, forgetting the rigours of hot country research as the hottest, near-scalding top centimetre of silty water washes gently around my tired limbs. Sulphurous gas in the air, faint but sufficient to add a Roman aroma to the cleansing quality of this unexpected bath. We wash off the mud in the sea: swimming is Phil's routine exercise in Larantuka, and why would it not be? Later he takes me to 'see my social life': an industrious, marginalised couple with a small shop out of town; he is Chinese, she is from Flores. We watch MTV with them, then see Manchester United lose to Sheffield Wednesday, live in the middle of Saturday night.*

Photo 5: Phil teaching Class 1 physics, 9th March 1998

Phil appears in class on Monday morning as a quiet, confident physics teacher with a purposive manner. Plenty of waiting when that's required; not much pretence at getting impatient. "How could you explain the connection that force and extension are proportional? How? Please..." A small lad eventually ventures a restatement. "Thanks". Later, holding a spring with fishing weights in a film cannister.... "If I add five, it extends by .5cm; then if I had 5 more, what happens?... And if I add more until there are fifteen?..." Having set up a group activity, Phil moves around discussing and seeking clarification of student's thinking. They respond with enthusiasm and respect, treating Phil as their teacher, nothing more. Indonesian language does not appear to be

much of a barrier any longer, but Phil is still conscious of it. At the end of the lesson. he asks for conclusions, then restates his own, asking for their help with the language. This is forthcoming, but too quickly; the students substitute particular words rather than rephrasing clearly. Straining to make a sentence clear and correct, Phil frowns towards me with concentration.

## The context of the placement

The school complex is large, but the uneven development of buildings, paths and playgrounds on the sloping site gives a rather crowded appearance. Phil has moved to live in part of the old girl's dormitory, just outside the side gate in the high school wall. It makes a comfortable house, cool and kept quite clean, attractively divided by a diagonal wall, two bedrooms, mosquito nets still down. There is a large shaded yard out the back with a massive tank holding water from the mountain spring and a paraffin cooker on a bench. A large bookshelf holds the entire Larantuka volunteer library, since Phil is the only volunteer in the town at the moment. An electric typewriter holds a half-finished worksheet; correction fluid stands nearby. The fridge is nearly empty. This house is a place of refuge; jumbled photos on a wall tell stories from the last volunteer conference in Bali, and of home; younger sister, a few parties, some drunken hugs, some straightened goodbyes. A long row of tapes near a cheap cassette player.

Inside the school compound, three old buildings house the boys' boarding facilities; there is a smell of boiled greens as Phil and I walk past. Boys are eating quickly, some squatting in the deep windowsills that help to shield the direct sun; some say hello. The new and substantial girls' boarding facility is nearby; steady income is relatively assured, as this is the only girls' boarding facility within a day's journey and the school is well-respected locally. Phil's colleague Ibu Elin tells me later:

> 'Although it's less well-equipped, the theoretical knowledge is excellent. The teachers here are disciplined about setting work, about tests, the teachers have to follow the rules... the teachers are afraid of the Catholic organisation. So they are always good… lots of students that take the university tests are sure to pass. Because the knowledge that they get here, is much better than from other schools… At the government schools, the teachers are relaxed, carefree… always get their pay'. They aren't afraid of the government' [EL10:200].

The school is run by the same Catholic order as Dola Monastery High School in Ende. The Catholic brothers occupy a low, open building at the top of the site, with a partially covered terrace which catches the best of the breeze up the hillside. Inside there are photographs of Dutch brothers of earlier decades; the Order will become Indonesian in a couple of years. The video CD player and pirated copies of 'Titanic' and 'Goldeneye' are unexpected; Phil explains that the youngest brother has good connections in Jakarta. Phil lived up here for eight months, until following much persuasion the head offered him his present house. Meals are served three times a day at a communal table, and Phil is always welcome. When he does eat there, they generally talk about him and marriage, or ignore him completely, the language being too fast and with too many references to be understood. 'It's very good now that I have the choice over whether to eat there or not. Now if I don't go for a couple of days, they start to ask, where have you been, etc. I think they don't like that too much. But its great just being able to go and eat in town'.

Going into town is one of the highlights of Phil's life here. Not that there is much to Larantuka, which consists of two long parallel roads and perhaps the most unnecessary one-way system in the world. There is a pleasant night market in the one shopping street, lots of home-made oil-lamps lighting the piles of oranges at the side of the road. The shops behind are owned by the Chinese, as is the Nirwala restaurant. This has become the local volunteer joint; there is a VSO sticker on the counter. For a person who is always conscious that he is different, it's a haven. Two friendly waitresses provide the necessary banter; this is emotional survival through flirting [EL8:61].

Photo 6: Preparing for a practical lesson: taking water to class

## The school's previous volunteer

The previous volunteer at the school had been an English teacher, about whose placement there was little consensus. John himself stated boldly that 'Many benefits will continue because… I always tried to use the most basic methods possible.. i.e. teaching with only chalk and a blackboard instead of a lot of fancy material which would not be duplicated'. But 'new VSOs have to be told that while they can do some good, they aren't going to change the local situation very much' (Annual report, March 1995). Phil considered that John had 'a positive effect overall… I

enjoy the staffroom atmosphere more than he did, but then I'm a school teacher, whereas he wasn't; he taught adults before. But generally they thought he was OK, good bloke. He basically wasn't here to do development, much more for meeting people, getting to know the culture, friendships with local people etc. He didn't really believe in the development role' [EL11:94-96].

Teaching colleagues stressed that Phil was much more open: 'To be honest, we never knew what John was thinking. Also partly because he was an English teacher, he talked a lot more with the English teachers, and they were a bit of a clique' [teacher, EL9:57-58]. One of those teachers gives a more upbeat account: 'We observed each other, he would teach using a new method, with students more active, then I would teach and he would watch. Children were happy… he was accepted, he extended for a year' [English teacher, EL9:50].

Frater Marianus ('Frater' in this context is similar to 'Brother') set up these two placements before retiring as headteacher. He is a good listener, interested and open to other ways, but these young Westerners have been challenging for him. 'John had difficulty with Indonesian, and so lacked the language to help children in the class. He achieved little result, even with the language stream. He was happy to help other teachers, who took something from him. But they don't really use what he taught them; they have visual aids, but no language lab. He wasn't very happy living here, quite stressed, wanted to move away from the asrama' [Marianus, EL9:10]. But the placement was worthwhile: 'Although it didn't have much of an outcome, it also didn't cost very much. And didn't cause any problems. So no loss'.

Everyone mentioned John's move out of the Brothers' asrama to a private house in town. For John, 'the first eight or nine months in Larantuka were extremely difficult due to housing problems, lack of other Westerners in town and the locals not being used to Westerners living here. After I moved out of the Christian brothers' house on the school grounds life improved rapidly. It was possible to improve social contacts and thereby increase the cross cultural understanding'.

## Participants' engagement in school and community

Marianus treats Phil somewhat like a favoured nephew: thoughtfully, generously, with gentle humour. He thinks of Phil primarily as a teacher: 'After several months, Phil felt able to try teaching practical. Slowly finding that he can, and now he is a real teacher, although only for practical lessons. Working together with other teachers, his language improves, and if he wants to extend, he's very welcome... his interaction with everyone is polite, fun, and he is of the same faith, which probably makes things easier'.

Prior to being a volunteer, Phil had taught for three years at a school in Milton Keynes, a Catholic school with very old style autocratic management. 'That was long enough: I needed a change, to get away for a bit'. He had been teaching children from a lot of one-parent families who had relocated from Birmingham, London's East End, Liverpool; first-generation Milton Keynes, without roots and very insecure. Not an easy place to start teaching, but a good sense of 'being in it together' with colleagues. After the placement Phil intends to return to teaching in the UK, but this time 'in a good school': he won't be a 'martyr' again.

Having been at the school for eighteen months, Phil seems comfortable with most of the teachers. He has greater informal access to the Brothers who run Aru High School than the majority of teaching staff have, whilst they have more structural connections through language and membership. But they share status as professional teachers; hence the 'teacher talk' in the staffroom and the reported ease of relations, use of humour etc.

Yet Phil gives the impression of being quite frustrated, both in person, and in letters and reports. 'Being foreign' in the community has long been a strain for Phil, a feeling strengthened by the illness and excesses of another volunteer in Larantuka who committed suicide in December 1997. In July 1998 Phil still felt that he was seen by most of the community as the 'friend of that mad-man'. His move into a separate house seems not to have increased his engagement with the wider community. Rather, he has spent more time alone, in which his sense of difference grows. It becomes easy to interpret comments from strangers as confirmation of the desirability of getting away from the otherness of Flores.

Other volunteers represented the biggest challenge to Phil when he arrived. Geoff on Lembata was 'Mr Flores': woe betide anyone who thought it was any different to the way he saw it… Karl in Maumere wouldn't talk about anything connected to VSO at all, he was so fed up with it'. In April 1998 the nearest volunteer is Alicia, but Phil is uncomfortable with her. His only real volunteer friend is Graham in Ende, 'the best guy in Indonesia... for all his faults and wrong ideas' [Phil, EL12:8]. They came in the same group. Now Graham tells me: 'I have a lot of friends… go round for the evening, having a laugh, whereas Phil basically spends a lot of time on his own, and finds the company of Indonesians tiring and tiresome. He made me realise how far I'd come; I used to find it difficult as well, of course' [EL7:132]. According to Graham, Phil often misinterprets Indonesian meanings, further compounding his sense of separation. 'When I'm with him in Larantuka, he says "Listen to these people, they're really taking the piss…". I say, "well maybe they don't mean it that way, they're just communicating" ' [EL7:381]. Phil warned me later that this was only Graham's version.

Whilst language differences continued to hinder free communication between Phil and the Brothers, these differences became his justification for not teaching theory classes or getting involved in wider school issues. This has limited his engagement to the area of practical science in which he believes he can make a more distinctive contribution. 'I see my job as enthusing kids to learn through the content of the lessons; I think I can do a lot more by being positive'. He is taking the opportunity to try out other ways of teaching; it is easier here than in the UK where 'it's more about control'. After nine months he felt he was dealing positively with some of the difficulties; he wrote 'I have learnt… to improvise with local resources, instead of moaning about lack of resources… To be realistic as to what can be achieved in a certain time limit' [Phil, EL8:17].

Since then, Phil has worked with all the science teachers promoting practical science, concentrating most of his time on developing the laboratory, team-teaching, producing a series of practical worksheets and enormous framed posters. Part of this work has relied on strenuous efforts at linking with schools back in the UK; people at the school where he was a pupil have

donated £2000 with which he bought equipment, chemicals, etc. He is probably justified in talking of developing 'the best equipped lab in Eastern Indonesia'.

But another major frustration is the lack of a permanent colleague, provoking Phil's fear that most of his work will be packed away and forgotten when he has gone. The school management is happy to have the laboratory, which has become part of the regular visitors' tour; but Phil is concerned that they value it only as a physical facility, enhancing the status of the school. He is angry about of 'the lack of use made of me, the wasted potential of the project. Development should be about training, about doing ourselves out of jobs. But they haven't appeared to take that on' [EL11:86]. He got 'steamed up and depressed, about the way the two women [Ibu Elin and another physics teacher] weren't promoted' to permanent posts at the school. 'It felt like I was completely wasting my time there's going to be no teacher here who can use the equipment'. Phil had already argued about this with Marianus, but five months after his arrival a new head was appointed. 'I went to see Yustus… he tried to laugh it off; I persisted, and in the end he said it was because they were women.' The situation was partially resolved in April 1998 after Ibu Elin became a government teacher posted at the local middle school. Subsequently the head of Aru High School made a payment to the government so that he could continue to employ Ibu Elin part-time.

In March 1998 Phil told me 'I think the head basically treats me very well, usually asks me to sit with him on the front row if watching some ceremony etc… gives me a lot of respect'. But the head was very reticent in discussing the placement: 'OK, well, I'll tell you my view since taking over in the last 6 months. Phil is good, very good. As a teacher, the students like him ..' He measured his words, trying to close the conversation. I point out that 'Phil sometimes gets stressed, wonders what he is doing', to which he replies 'He's doing well, so I don't say anything'. Their relationship subsequently became more tense and distant; in July 1998 Phil surmised that the head 'feels a bit personally threatened by having a bule [white person] around. He doesn't feel totally in control - he takes the piss too often. One time I got angry and told him to shut his mouth. Neither of us has apologised yet' [EL17:19].

### Collaborative science teaching

In contrast, the engagement between Phil and his closest colleagues through teaching activities means that they relate well together, and increasingly share a definition of 'good science teaching in Larantuka'. He has learnt to see the usefulness of good oral teaching, particularly ways of explaining and making links. Practical science is now more valuable to Ibu Elin as a means to developing both her own understanding and that of her students.

One Saturday morning, Ibu Elin decided to include a demonstration of water pressure which she and Phil had already done with parallel classes. The breeze from the sea beyond the road was cooling the classroom, holding the early morning heat at bay. Ibu Elin was demanding, generating a momentum through a mixture of closed and open questions:

> 'What is a fluid? It's something that can flow. What things can flow? Yes, liquids: but is that all? That's right, gases too. Imagine that this room is shut up, and then there's a bad

smell, can you smell it? Yes, so that shows that gases flow too, right?… Do you understand pressure? Let's say these two girls, one has sharp shoes, the other flat. They walk on the beach. Which one puts higher pressure on the plants? The one with sharp shoes? Is that right? Yes. But why? Why?

Photo 7: Ibu Elin teaching concepts of pressure, Saturday 4th April, 1998

Ibu Elin rephrases questions, checking that a lot of students really understand. The worksheets have been out since the beginning; they are nicely typed, with neat diagrams, photocopied, enough for one between two students in four groups of nine around the room, to be collected again at the end. As Phil says, the worksheet is really a lesson plan; they work through it as a class, doing the practicals as demos, students reading out the instructions each time, a lot of different students called on in the different groups. 'It's like a record of what I did so that they can do it themselves when I'm not there'. Both Phil and Elin see these worksheets as their joint product, for she checks the language and Phil's meaning.

They have shifted the tables into squares for the groups; the two manometers are on two tables at the front. Phil is worried that it's not easy to see the liquid in them, especially from the back. Ibu Elin moves around, from the board to her desk by the window, then in front of the equipment, then sitting on a spare chair by the door, waiting for answers. She has presence; she captures interest, following and then leading the thoughts of the students. She keeps this up for over an hour and a half. Phil notices that the students are flagging.

There are a few characters that stand out in some groups: a gangly lad two away from me in the group at the back, who reads very confidently and strings a sentence together in answer when called upon, a little lad who's not into puberty yet, but likes to carry the class along, with his forceful delivery, pausing without embarrassment to choose the right words. One of the girls in his group is certain of her ability to lead their thinking. The lad opposite her seeks confirmation from

the two of us, when he thinks he spots a mistake. Phil says that they are a good class, that they get stuck in, and that there is little egotism, they generally are not into pulling each other down. Rather unfairly I linger over taking a photo; the student concerned becomes embarassed and laughter spreads around the room. Ibu Elin is quick to let everyone know that this is not acceptable behaviour.

In the staffroom after the lesson Pak Dom, who is a permanent teacher here, picks up a book of their worksheets and whistles through it, very impressed by how much and how good. Phil is quick to explain that he and Ibu Elin have done it together; Elin looks pleased. Later Ibu Elin says that the way she teaches has been largely affected by Phil, an interpretation which we ponder. We think she means it: as she teaches this now, it is clear that she is confident about her understanding, which would be difficult without the practical experience she has gained with him.

An interview with Elin and Phil provides an opportunity to see something of the way they relate to each other. Phil tells me later that she felt more comfortable with him there: as a male stranger I would be rather threatening on my own. As she carefully sorted the statement cards, Elin sometimes tried to defer to Phil, especially on cards relating to him.... but about their relationship, she was unequivocally positive. It helped that she was already engaged when he arrived [EL10:64-65].

> 'When I first came here, there was nothing going on in the lab at all. It was always locked. I still remember when you first came Phil, and you told me off for not knowing what copper looked like' [Ibu Elin, EL10:62].

They talk of trust, and appear comfortable together.

Photo 8: Interview with Ibu Elin: using statements, Saturday 4th April, 1998

When Elin thinks about what Phil is learning in the placement, it is in terms of his behaviour in relation to 'culture': 'He used to tell me off a lot; not so much now'… 'whenever he comes to my

house I offer tea or coffee: now he does the same when I go there'. The closer it gets to the time he should go home, 'the funnier he gets; the better he gets'.

Her conception of their work together is oriented to her own learning: she sees Phil as good value for money, a person who can teach her a lot because he has knowledge and willingness to help which she intends to use. Practical science is valuable to Ibu Elin as a means to developing both her own understanding and that of her students. In the past, she said, she could have told students that the larger the amplitude, the higher the note produced. But she knew that would have been wrong: 'It's that the sound will be large, yeah, Pak Phil? If I talk about it only, they won't understand… if they didn't see it they wouldn't know it. No way'. They start to plan how to make some simple equipment for the local middle school to which Elin has recently been appointed.

Back in August 1997 Phil wrote 'I am hoping that in the next stage of my placement my relationship with colleagues changes so that they can continue to develop the science lab and teaching of science by themselves without me there as a motivator' [EL8:18]. This theme of sustainability had influenced my own practice as a volunteer; later in the interview the three of us elaborated a role for Ibu Elin as a transformed, competent science educator ready to take over when Phil leaves:

> Ibu Elin: I usually enjoy teaching here, that's one thing. But I mostly do it, for the sake of the students. If I try, and if they get a new physics teacher here, maybe I can help him or her to be familiar with the lab, with the equipment. And I think, certainly they hope that I will be able to do that.
>
> Andy: yeah, that's right.
>
> Phil: Yeah, true.
>
> Andy: That you should guide the new teachers as well.
>
> Phil: You can be a teacher trainer....

Ibu Elin realises what we are doing, and turns the focus back through what she has learnt to what Phil has done.

> 'How can I do it...! I've only learnt a bit, but I can have a go! (laughing) It's not that I've mastered it all, you understand. But a large part of it, it's a source of pride to me, it's extraordinary to me that I.. and so I'm very thankful'.

Phil is embarassed; Elin goes on to repeat the importance of the work they have done together in terms of her own understanding.

Social life always entails the possibility that people will come to share the same definitions of situations. Phil and Elin's shared perspectives go beyond the technical into the political. To Phil, Ibu Elin's status in the eyes of the school leadership signifies the unsustainability of his project after his departure, and this has fed his conflict with the leadership. Ibu Elin now sees her own links with the school in the light of their joint project, although she is careful to defer to Phil in all technical respects.

From Phil's perspective good science teaching can do more than enhance the school's reputation, and this detachment had encouraged Ibu Elin in moving beyond the confines of that institution.

The autonomy of their partnership, together with Elin's posting at the nearby middle school, has engendered a real possibility of the project moving beyond its home institution; other local headteachers had invited Phil to come and work with their physics teachers, one being Ibu Elin's school. [EL8:91]. This embryonic collaborative network is apparently new to Larantuka, where relationships between schools are generally competitive, and it struggles to get started. Four teachers had come to Phil's first training session in early 1998 [EL9:95], but no-one had turned up the week after, and only one the following week. Marianus' explanation was that Phil and John's efforts to involve teachers from other schools had failed 'probably because there was no money for transportation'.

Phil and Elin have used the differences between them and their common distance from the institution to achieve their respective developing goals, and those goals have been modified by their interaction. In her collaboration with Phil, Ibu Elin's power to define the situation derives from her access to the resources of language, custom and practice. But their collaboration also depends on Phil's power to define the situation, which he draws from his greater curricular knowledge, and from his ability to enhance the facilities of the school through his connections with richer communities in the UK. He has sole charge of the money donated and uses it to develop the laboratory according to his own perception of a laboratory for good science teaching.

The exit option is the main element under Phil's control. His colleagues and the school management recognise his right as a competent volunteer to define the duration of his participation. Many conversations in February and March 1998 involved Phil's eventual departure. This topic more than others reveals something of the way he is appreciated by closest colleagues. 'Because he has to go home, see his parents. So, you may go home, Pak Phil, but in the time that's left, we have to learn a lot. Because we've still got six months haven't we?' [Ibu Elin, EL10:263].

To summarise: sufficient centres of stability emerge in this placement to sustain the participants (and it should be recognised that all of them are volunteers, for in no sense are teaching staff forced to work with Phil). The working relationship between Phil and Ibu Elin is based on mutual need in which they develop their identities; the development of a concept of good science teaching in Larantuka is a key product for them, and the working laboratory stands as an effective contribution to the school institution in which the placement is sited. The sense of meaning produced is sufficiently shared by participants that they maintain their engagement despite the misunderstandings, isolation and failure to develop the range of activities envisaged from the outset. Ibu Elin should have the last words as she creatively selects and uses statements on cards to demonstrate her distance from the school hierarchy:

> '"Working here is enjoyable"… Learning to use practical equipment is enjoyable, not the low wages and the way I've been treated'. '"Women have less power than men in this institution" (40)… The Brothers just assume that women will get pregnant and therefore have lots of leave. So they won't make them permanent teachers of the Catholic organisation'.

Ibu Elin says that the placement can help the children who will develop the area:

> Andy: Is that because Phil works with the students directly, or because he works with you who works with the students?
>
> Ibu Elin: Because he works with the teachers.. and also the children. But the most important is with the teachers - because he is going to leave, then we will continue his work (laughing)
>
> Andy: You will make Pak Phil's heart glad (laugh)
>
> Phil: You'll make my head bigger too.

Through such interactions, not all so explicit, participation in this placement is sustained.

### A focus on social resources and learning

The initial distribution of resources in the placement at SMUK Aru was very similar to that at Dola. Phil was a guest, given a room in the heart of the community, positioned as an expert science teacher; he was the second volunteer rather than the first. The case study describes places and times which Phil has negotiated and constructed for himself: the privacy of the house which he managed to negotiate, the option to avoid the communal meal, the freedom to ride along the coast and bathe at the hot springs. Phil is shown to have become ambivalent about Indonesian people in general; resenting being positioned as a foreigner, and constructing the social context as sometimes hostile to him. The suicide of another volunteer is a tragedy that affected Phil not only psychologically, but also through his positioning by townsfolk. In Phil's own reflection on the case study when back in the UK, he retells the story of his disillusionment:

> 'Many thanks for your case-study notes, which I read with great interest. They have helped to shed some light on my VSO experience, which I am still trying to evaluate in my own mind. Now that I am back in the UK and back to 'normality', perhaps I can be more objective about the experience. I realise now what a fantastic experience Flores and SMUK Aru were and I am thankful that I decided to go for VSO. I am also beginning to regain my enthusiasm for developing world issues, which I have to say were unfortunately becoming seriously eroded by the time I left Flores. However this seems to be the reality for some volunteers, where the isolation, loneliness and general 'otherness' of the developing world, begin to wear away our drive to change and make things happen. Instead we get into a routine and think merely of how long there is to go until the end' (Phil James, 16th Dec 1998, parent's home in Crossmaglen)

But this is not the whole story of this placement. A key process for Elin and Phil was the negotiation of practical science teaching at the school. They position each other in relation to the local practice of science teaching, and the configuration of social resources which that entails; they discuss materials, processes in the lab, preparation time, mutual observation, information about science and the learning of science. As with David, Phil evaluates his experience of volunteering in terms of the difference he made; his work with Elin seemed very important:

> 'On reflection I feel that I certainly did make a difference to SMUK Aru. Perhaps not a massive difference, but one that will improve the skills and attitudes of a few key people. It will be interesting to go back in a couple of years time to meet Ibu Elin et al and see what has developed, if anything, from my placement. I think it is clear that Ibu Elin's self-confidence, practical skills and status in the eyes of the school have certainly increased as a result of the placement. It is also clear that she values practical work as a way to teach students science' [Phil James, Dec 1998, parent's home in UK, EL20:7].

The interview with Elin in the presence of Phil gave a good chance to observe their negotiation of respective positions. Elin takes every opportunity to demonstrate how Phil is important: it is, for example, his presence that makes the school different for her:

> 'Quite different, because there is a VSO who can help me to understand. We didn't do many practicals in the school in Kupang. And now since I've moved to SMP Negeri I, I'm already familiar with lots of equipment there, maybe I won't doubt myself to use them. Because I've been given knowledge by Pak Phil. I've seen lots of things with him, and I feel I can. Yeah. Maybe…' [EL10:137]

When I questioned Elin on why she felt suitable to work with Phil, she was very clear that the basis was not friendship, as I suggested:

> 'No! It's because of a good working relationship, not just because we are friends. Because of a good understanding, we work together well. If I had an argument with Pak Phil, and he said 'Oh, learn it yourself', then I would feel that we weren't suitable… Like Ibu Lus. I would ask her something... she would say oh don't you know that! That left me unable to ask her again even if I still didn't understand. Yeah. It's because Pak Phil is open, I am also open, so that finally we can work well together' [EL10:118].

This open collaboration between Phil and Ibu Elin highlights for both of them the lack of a productive engagement with the school leadership, who have disregarded Elin as a female physics teacher whilst welcoming Phil's creation of a laboratory, which they see as enhancing the status of the institution locally. For Phil, although the laboratory was an achievement in itself, most of the significance lay in its continuing use, and Elin’s potential departure stood for the waste that would result were it to stand unused. The case study describes what Phil learnt about the school leadership through negotiation over her status, and how he used his own position to improve her status within the local education system:

> 'She's not that 'in'… But maybe I have made a difference to her, by helping her believe in herself more. Going into SMP Negeri with her is partly about doing practical, but its also good for her, “look I'm getting the white guy in”, and I don't mind doing that for her’. [EL11:5].

In their separate Q sorts, Phil and Elin are in almost perfect agreement about themselves as participants, except that she disagrees that she is in any way more effective than him. But their accounts of the context differ: unlike Phil, Elin reports that there were many expectations of the placement, that they originally had and have further established clear aims, that this is a part of a wider improvement plan, and that the placement is alleviating poverty. The relatively negative tone apparent in Phil's assessment of the broader context of his work is evident in the case study but he later says this was not the whole story. When he later measures what he achieved against the time he was prepared to stay in Flores, he is satisfied:

> 'For two years' work I did pretty well. I agree that a lot more could have been achieved, but this takes time and a lot of commitment, something I was not prepared to give more of. I fully realise that what I did in the two years is just a drop in the ocean but I also realise that it was a realistic contribution for a two year commitment' [EL20:10].

As at Dola, there are several stories of this placement. As the placement proceeded, both Elin and Phil were positioned in multiple ways: Elin as competent professional and quick learner by Phil and her pupils as they elaborated the practice of science education, as reproduction machine by the

institutional hieracrchy, as important colleague and friend by Phil, eventually as bold woman teacher as she learnt to recognise her learning. Phil was positioned as influential Westerner through his access to material resources; as needing friendship in his frustrated isolation; as 'friend of that mad-man' by strangers, as unknowable challenge to the hierarchy of the institution; as friend by a couple themselves outsiders in the locality; as expert and close colleague by Elin, and as successful volunteer by himself, through his collaboration with Elin and his overall achievements in two years. The sense of contingency is heavy in this placement. Change is seen to depend on so many factors, of which Elin's return is only the most obvious.

### Case Study III: Participating with Bamboo

This placement is based at the Institute for Bamboo Development in Flores (IBDF), a small non-governmental organisation located near Maumere, on the island of Flores. The volunteer is Alicia Pelini, age group 26-35, an architect from Venezuala with Italian nationality; her key colleague is the manager Marcus Siru. The volunteer's job title is bamboo architect. The placement started in November 1996 and was visited sixteen months later on 4th March 1998, and again from 8th to 9th April 1998.

The context for this placement, centred on the promotion of bamboo architecture, began to take shape early in 1992. Marcus, a young Indonesian graduate in community development, returned to his home island of Flores and began working for Yaspem, a local agricultural training and development NGO. Alicia's volunteer predecessor was working there, becoming frustrated:

> 'Westerners' ideas are often seen as changes for the sake of it, and not very important; Sarah was trying to change the way things were organised; she was right, but it was fortunate that I came along then, since Sarah had got to the point of thinking that it was time to go home. [Marcus Siru, March 1998, M2:19]

Marcus and Sarah worked together for four years:

> '… then the idea of bamboo arose... after the 1992 earthquake, the International Bamboo Foundation (IBF) in Bali came to do a demonstration, and it seemed that this could be a good thing for Flores' [Marcus Siru, March 1998, M2:29]

In Flores, as elsewhere in Indonesia, traditional building materials such as bamboo have less status than concrete, but are much safer in earthquakes. Flores is located in an active seismic zone classified as 'very high risk' by the South East Asian Association of Seismology and Earthquake Engineering. Having attended an IBF workshop in Bali, Marcus and Sarah led a workshop on bamboo treatment for building at Easter 1994 for local NGOs from all over Flores, and began raising public awareness. In May 1995 they separated from Yaspem to form IBDF (The Institute for Bamboo Development in Flores).

Sarah returned to the UK in early 1996; Marcus and other staff continued to develop the NGO, attracting funding from excited donors.

> "All this time I have never written to Sarah… I thought I would wait until she came back, she's bound to be here soon, for Yuli's wedding. It will give her a nice surprise, to see everything that we've done, which is quite a lot, really. I can't wait for her to come back, to see her again.' [Marcus, March 1998, M2:65].

Alicia's placement description emphasises Marcus's role, but there is no doubt that Sarah had at least as great an influence on the shaping of the new organisation. Talking to me eighteen months after her return to the UK, Sarah was confident that she had done a good job as a volunteer, and had a positive effect on the situation.

Marcus and the administrator Yuli characterised Sarah as someone able to work all night; a strong walker on the physically demanding visits to villages in which the project developed. 'We had to be prepared to work all hours with her', Marcus told me. He worked with her on policy and proposals, whilst Yuli worked with her on administration, practice, documentation and training manuals. Two years' later, Yuli said that she was using a lot of the experience she had gained with Sarah.

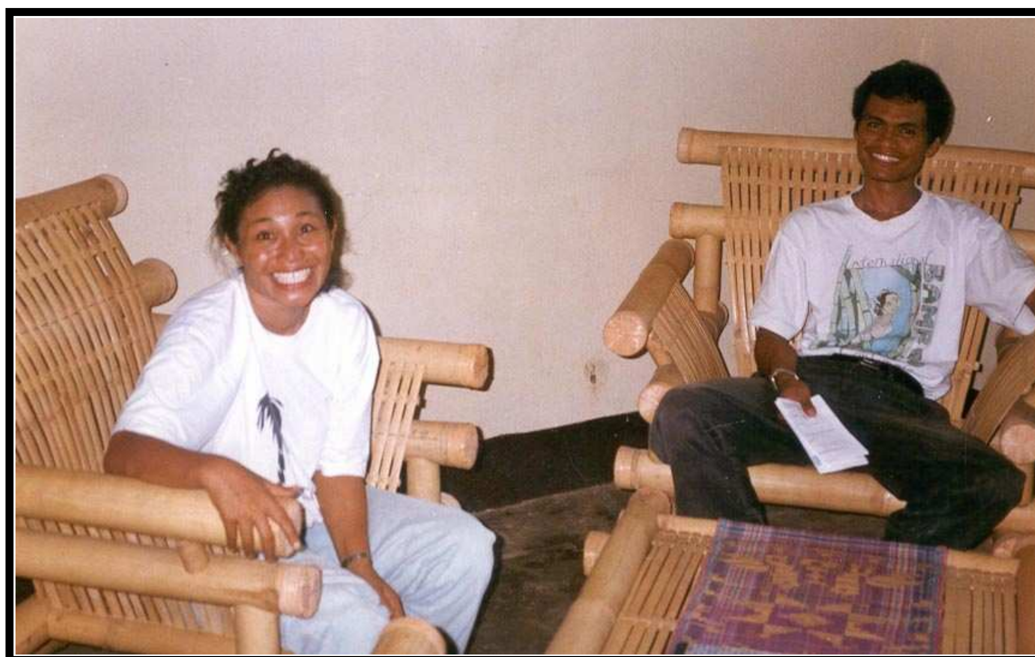

Photo 9: Yuli and Marcus in the IBDF office, 8th April 1998

Marcus and Yuli were prepared for the new volunteer to be very different from Sarah. Marcus understood that a lot depended on him to provide the initial direction; he found Alicia keen to understand the context of their work, and to talk through any difficulties. In the first few weeks the problem was comparison:

> '… "Sarah did it this way". I would say to them "well that was Sarah, that's not me…". It was a time of shock for both sides.... getting used to each other. Early on (Marcus and I) went on a training course together in Lombok, and that was good, lot of time for talking' [Alicia, her house, 5th March 1998, M1:85].

For Marcus, Alicia was ideal: 'not involved in the management of the organisation, she just got on with the technical business of 'preparing people and designs' [Marcus, M2:55]. Alicia commented later:

> 'I don't know much about the organisation… whatever corruption there might be going on, I don't want to know about it' [8th March, M1:129]

Yet the line between 'preparing people' and management is quite a narrow one. Perhaps it suited Marcus that Alicia saw her role as purely technical; Alicia seemed happy to have no responsibilities for the daily running of the organisation. But 'Alicia has instigated a new way of working at IBDF using a group system and giving each group their own separate responsibilities. Each group meets once a week with Alicia to evaluate at her house… work is more effective than 6 months ago' [Roger Greene, visit report, October 1997, M1:40]. Alicia was excited about this change in structure:

> 'It was impossible to train all of them everything I had learnt over six years, so instead I got them all to choose their speciality: i.e. preparation and treatment of bamboo, design, etc. And this is something volunteers should know: make them all head of something, 'Head of the Workshop', etc. They all feel great about it!' [Alicia, M1:93-96]

The placement has been driven by a simple aim, although Marcus was sarcastic about the concept of a shared vision:

> 'Ah, that's too complicated, trying to impress… We do have a vision, and all my staff share it. It is - use bamboo as much as possible, to save cutting down trees. That's it. Very simple. But enough to get going on' [M2:9]

Told like this, the business of IBDF is design and construction; but the unusual building material gives a sense of mission, and the task is conversion. This religious analogy originated in conversation with Alicia:

> 'And so bamboo entered my life. At the same time there was a conference in Venezuala, with loads of bamboo experts from Columbia... so it was like coincidence again. And then I left to go to France, applied for Architects without Frontiers, really wanting to go to Africa and use bricks; while I was waiting for them went to England to learn English, applied to VSO' [Alicia, M1:109].

Alicia's application to VSO as a bamboo architect coincided with Marcus and Sarah's request for a volunteer with precisely this rare professional background… I had two hours with Sarah in London, and she seemed like a really brilliant person, I want to set up an NGO with her in Venezuala one day - I gave her a book on coincidence'.

> A: It's like a religion, this bamboo story… going by leaps and bounds around the world.
>
> T: I very much agree, there is something almost mystical about it. .. (interview, Alicia, 5th March, 1998)

IBDF has emerged as a well-resourced institution with a clear medium-term goal, and which is not being tackled by other agencies. The institution gains an identity through this clarity, reflected back by donors, volunteer agency, staff, and local people. Marcus's pragmatic management style works well in this context:

> 'The important thing for everybody is that the product is right. I wanted Alicia to concentrate on designing. Not many rules… as long as everyone keeps their commitment to planned targets… you can fly where you like as long as the output is achieved. And it goes for all seven staff, including the four less senior' [Marcus, M2: 50-52].

Photo 10: Alicia working on designs at home in Maumere, 5th March, 1998

## Learning and difference

In a placement with a clear direction but no detailed plan, many opportunities exist for learning on the part of both volunteer and colleagues. The bamboo project positions them all as learners in some respects. Marcus describes what he and others in the placement have learnt from having volunteers in this context:

> 'Architectural skill and in bamboo construction are very rare in Indonesia and not yet available in Flores. Having a volunteer IBDF can develop appropriate architecture and bamboo construction for the local people; the shortage or lack of expertise at IBDF can be overcome… In five years of working with volunteers there haven't been any obstacles or difficulties which have prevented our work relationship. The intensity or quality of communication is very good. And more important, we have learned a lot about development and our organisation has experienced many improvements… In the short time of eight months there has already been a significant increase in the staff's understanding of bamboo architecture and construction, and its sustainable benefits. What has been developed is very appropriate and workable' [Marcus, placement evaluation report July 1997, M1:32].

Alicia is clear about her enjoyment of and need for learning. Eight months into the placement the volunteer agency programme officer was

> 'impressed by the way you've adopted the attitude that you are in the placement to learn as well as teach. I think this has helped you to settle in there and to cement your relations with the other staff in the yayasan'. [M1:35].

With Marcus at least, she feels that this mutuality is well-established. She characterised her placement as a paid, postgraduate course:

> 'With Marcus, it really feels like its an exchange, like Third World countries exchanging: sharing a technology, in which I have an extra level of training that they don't have, for understanding of their traditions: teach me how you live' [M1:76]

Marcus is aware of Alicia's attitude: '"She is learning a lot through this placement" (49)... She says she is; I'll go along with what she says'. Whilst Alicia's role is easily labelled as 'bamboo architect', the meaning of her role has to be constructed in context. Eight months into her placement Alicia wrote:

> 'I realised that the main issue was going to be changing people's perceptions of using bamboo as a building material. It was not worth developing a hi-tech system of using bamboo if no-one would use it. That's why I investigated the house typologies to find out the aesthetic and technical reasoning 'to contribute with solutions based in their own identity and building tradition' [placement report, July 1997, M1:21].

This understanding of context informs Alicia's designs; the construction team learns new building techniques:

> 'Not having a clear defined set of aims beforehand, gives me the freedom to do what I want to do. I'm much happier than if I had to fit that. I've changed what I came here to do. [None of the staff] could read an architectural drawing, so there was no way I could start training a counterpart.. But they have enough skills for the revised expectations...' [M1:143].

Everyone can learn from the completed buildings. Alicia characterises the placement as an exchange, and has worked hard to share this with colleagues.

> 'I don't feel the stress that I have to know everything. I often tell them, I don't know! I'm not sure!… A key is that I've convinced them that its worth trying things, even if they don't work. I say things like, we won't know until the first earthquake... and get across the idea that it's all right to have a go' [M1:76].

By working with the inherent flexibility of this small NGO, Alicia has facilitated change. But while revising her expectations and activities to fit the context is one thing, changing herself and her behaviour is quite another; she refuses to be positioned in absolute terms:

> 'I think VSO places too much stress on adapting to the way of doing things.... for me, it seems more effective to be out here [gesturing with an outstretched arm] so that they say she was crazy but they move a little bit to here.... rather than try and adapt and end up changing nothing. Then what's the point of coming here?' [Alicia, March 1998, M1:154].

Alicia only accepts so much imposition, and the negotiation of a suitable place of work was a defining moment in her relationship with Marcus:

> 'I started off living near the office where they were building; but after I while I said to Marcus… that I needed somewhere else more peaceful, away from the noise of the generator, to think, design, etc. So now I do a morning here, and half a day on the site making sure it's working OK' [Alicia, March 1998, M1:98].

Adaptation has become more visible in the placement. For Marcus as for Alicia, adaptation involves coming to terms with difference, learning to accommodate it; not changing behaviour. Maintaining difference from at the same time as being engaged with and learning about the dominant other, provides an opportunity for their learning as well.

> 'She found it quite hard to adapt to local way of life' (29). Maybe earlier, but she is happy now. [M3:20-21] 'She has adapted well to the local situation' (4). What adapting means here is that you have changed your thinking so as to be able to understand the different

> habits, food, way of eating, character of the people... NOT that you have changed to follow all those things. As long as you can say I accept that this is their way of doing things, that's is enough, that's fine [Qsort interview, Marcus, April 1998, M3:31].

The extent to which Alicia had come to terms with continuing difference was evident in her story about animal sacrifice:

> 'Local tradition and belief has a big impact on activities in the placement' (32). I love dogs, and every time a building is finished, a dog has to be killed in the foundations, throat cut so that the blood runs over them.... the first time when I realised what was going to happen I quickly stood up, said 'Permisi permisi, orang Barat bodoh semua...' (excuse me, excuse me, all Westerners are stupid) and went out. So I have to get used to the idea that my buildings cause dogs to die; I have to listen to them crying for two minutes... [M1:144]

Marcus and Alicia expressed similar views on the placement priorities and to some extent on the nature of the placement as an exchange. They had also developed some common ground about the expectations of the volunteer agency:

> 'We share some complicity, such as in relation to VSO as a large organisation; like when Roger was coming, he sent a letter to say he was coming on the 28th, and I was there but Marcus didn't turn up, and Roger was pretty angry, and I said to Marcus why didn't you come, you had the letter, and he said f_ the 28th, I had other things to do besides waiting around for Roger all day. I understood, and we shared a laugh about it, and later I explained to Roger' [Alicia, March 1998, M1:81]

In April 1998, it seemed that all the key actors largely accepted and understood the differences between them. Alicia was keen to contrast her placement with those I had already visited:

> 'You must have heard a lot of dismal stories in your travels so far, through Flores?… Well, I have to say that my placement is absolutely brilliant. I'm really enjoying myself' [M1:193]

The biggest culture shock, she says, came from the language course in Yogya, where she had to live alongside twenty-two new volunteers from the UK. 'I don't really understand it. In Ven, OK everybody sins, but they know it is sinning' [M2:36]. Alicia's relationships with other volunteers were clearly strained; she told how one of those volunteers came to defacate in her garden on his last day in Maumere. If Alicia had any explanation for this, she did not offer it.

Marcus also compared his volunteers others that he had met or heard about. He felt lucky to have had two volunteers, good people with a real commitment to working. 'Lucky to have had two volunteers, one after the other?' I asked. 'No, to have two good volunteers: compared to some of those I have seen around'. [March 1998, M2:15]. Marcus had observed others who appeared much less committed.

For Alicia, success as she defined it depended on her alone:

> 'Effectiveness at work depends on relationship with colleagues' (30). No, absolutely not. The success of the placement is up to me... if it doesn't work with colleagues, then I do something else. [Qsort interview, Alicia, April 1998, M1:146]

Photo 11: The prototype bamboo house

Participation with colleagues was never central to Alicia's understanding of herself as a volunteer. Nevertheless her key colleagues did become important to her. One episode between my two visits demonstrated this: as I recorded in my diary, 'Alicia knew when I came last time that it was going to be stressful moving house. But when she did so, the 30 guys living on site, building the office and the church at Sea World, spent the day laughing at her.... or laughing and joking with her in their local language, and she felt that it was at her' [M1:182]. Alicia explained what happened next:

> 'I was so stressed, moving everything; and I didn't have time to get everything sorted out how I wanted it.... there was no electricity connected, and they wouldn't help me with anything, just kept joking... Then Marcus came round, and I just burst into tears, I said I would be all right it was just the stress of the move etc. And he is such a great guy... After I had calmed down he just got all the men together, and quietly, without getting angry, asked them to imagine what it would be like if they were a single woman on their own, moving house next to a camp with thirty men who didn't help out but just kept laughing and joking all the time... "You like working here, doing this bamboo construction don't you?" "Yes..." "Well it's only possible because of Alicia, and she's going to leave if things don't change round here". Then he did something amazing: you know how difficult it is for people (in Indonesia) to show their feelings here? he stood up, embraced me, kissed me on the forehead, and said "Alicia, we need you here"' [Alicia, April 1998, M1:187].

What did this mean for Alicia? Unlike many volunteers, Alicia is comfortable talking about emotions of weakness, either others or her own - and people, including some Indonesians, have been comfortable expressing their emotions with her. Many volunteers express frustration and anger, disappointment and disillusionment, but few are able to talk so openly about shame, upset, hurt or exclusion.

This is part of the context of Marcus's open embrace, his demonstration of identification in front of the other workers. That event was a meeting between the two of them which made this explicit; the kind of meeting that creates new possibilities of communication. I was surprised at the reaction Alicia's story evoked in me:

> 'This I find brings tears to my eyes!.. it's such a raw feeling, to be wanted, or not wanted; to know you are needed, to think you are useless in such a place. It recalled several times in my own volunteer placement where I really felt appreciated for who I was...' (my diary, 8th April, 1998)

Marcus did not tell me anything of this episode, but he may have been reflecting on it in responding to the statement 'We often have a laugh at work':

> 'With Sarah, that's true' [M3:118-120].

For Marcus, the biggest difference between Alicia and Sarah was their boldness; 'Sarah was never afraid to go anywhere…whereas Alicia always has that fear, like Indonesians' [M2:59]. For all her rhetoric on the importance of being herself, it seemed that Alicia had quite a tentative hold on her place in this community; that she depended on one or two people but that she was really quite close to the edge. The episode with Marcus demonstrated her feeling of difference, but so did the performance for inquisitive new neighbours that she recounted, where she had opened the windows in her new house so that 'twenty pairs of eyes could watch from the road' as she 'cavorting around to music'.

This impression was strengthened by her openness about needs for friends and relationships. She had separated her personal identity from her professional role:

> 'My closest Indonesian friends here are my colleagues?' (27). No, my pembantu, my neighbours in Maumere, Kermin..' [Alicia, April 1998, M1:142]

> 'I've got closer to all my colleagues because all the other volunteers living in Maumere left and because I moved to my new house which is in the working place… In general it is a good working relation but I never meant to be more than that. At home, my best friends are not the people I work with. Why should it be different here?… *What do you regard as fundamental about your job, your experience here? What motivates, energises, enthuses you now? And what demotivates, bores, frustrates you now?* The whole professional experience is great. I am learning a lot and doing a job that I love to do. The only thing that frustrates me about being here is not being able to develop a stable relationship with a partner' [questionnaire, August 1998, M12:28].

Towards the end of the placement, Alicia felt accepted: 'They don't see me as an equal but I'm not on a pedestal either' (questionnaire, August 1998). One event in particular allowed her to understand people's genuine warmth for her:

> 'My mother came to visit me and by seeing the way people behave with her here, I had the feeling that they really like me being here and accept me. They were great. A lot of people came every day to meet her and to bring presents. My colleagues and people from the community make her feel at home' (uestionnaire, August 1998). [M12: 38-40]

Alicia can see development going on: 'I can see the people I work with learning from our daily work. It is just a small step but little by little it will make the difference one day (I hope!)' [questionnaire, Alicia, Aug 1998, M12:35-36]. Her pragmatic attitude was exemplified in her satisfaction over some work she did for a friend:

> 'I helped a wonderful waitress that I met in Seaworld to set up a home-stay; husband was an unemployed alcoholic, all she had was a big house but it was in a bad state of repair. [M1:172] She is a great cook, and a wonderful leader type of personality... but she didn't think it was possible… I'll show you something I'm very proud of.... '

A neat photocopied book, produced in colour, told this woman's story with photographs and detailed the plans to potential donors, who had responded. It was evident that this individual and successful effort on behalf of a friend had given Alicia a lot of pleasure and helped her to feel useful.

These volunteer placements have played a part in the success of the institution and its status within the local NGO world:

> '"This institution is well respected compared to others of its kind in this area?" (44). Yes, to the point that there are people in FSSM (Self-Help Community Solidarity Forum) who want to nominate me as the next head. I would accept, as long as the staff are in agreement that it wouldn't interfere with our activities' [Marcus, Qsort interview, April 1998, M3:28].

### A focus on social resources and learning

Alicia was initially positioned not as a guest, but as someone come to fulfil a specific and vital role in a development plan; this was a rationally-planned placement with a central purpose derived through a process which had gone on between the previous volunteer and her colleagues. Alicia gives an account of the placement as if it was meant to be, constructing the story of how she came to be involved as a series of coincidences. Where there are tensions between the plan and the reality she perceives, this unambiguous purpose is a source of security. Marcus also uses the 'simple, direct' identity to establish the particular characteristics of this organisation, building the institution's knowledge of itself.

In the day-to-day working of the organisation, Alicia positions herself explicitly as a learner, along with all the participants. She needs to start from where others are. Learning is understood as the critical process in this placement; other processes depend on it. The placement is participative and working well. But the key relationships in the placement are not in fact as open as this story suggests. Alicia's agreement with Marcus to hide her considerable involvement in organisation and strategy means that she is positioned as the technical expert, he as the undisputed manager. In their Q sorts, Alicia and Marcus differ significantly on about one third of the statements; the list can be read as if they are working in different placements. In stark contrast to Alicia, Marcus reports that she does nothing significant outside the placement; that her colleagues are her closest Indonesian friends and that they socialise a lot together; that she found it quite hard to adapt but that she feels like one of the staff now; that they spend a lot of time discussing things, coming to mutual understanding and that working together is the most important activity in the placement; that outsiders are included in local culture, and that they are effectively reducing poverty.

The purpose of these accounts is different to that which produces their sense of agreement in the case study. By remaining silent about Alicia's problems, and claiming ignorance of her work outside the placement, Marcus constructs Alicia as just one of (his) staff; this reinforces his position as the boss. He does not mention his public embrace of her; that was the strategic action

of a manager. So Marcus emphasises Alicia's participation and their effectiveness, whereas Alicia emphasises her distinctive identity and the difficulties that have arisen. Marcus's Q sort is an account of Alicia's participation in the placement, whereas Alicia's Q sort is an account of her independence.

Alicia negotiates a position: a house, a job, a role. Her colleagues learn that she wants privacy, that she has boundaries. She learns that they will adapt, up to a point. Alicia describes her negotiation of position in relation to the animal sacrifice, confirming that she can find ways to be herself. There are harder boundaries in the social order, with a coercive edge; non-negotiable limits on both sides.

## Case Study IV: The Frustration of Facilitation

This placement is based at the Foundation for Resources and Environment for Sustainable Development, a non-governmental organisation with about ten staff located near Mataram, on the island of Lombok. The volunteer is Jan Eco, age group 26-35, a development worker from Britain; her key colleague is the manager Pak Tadi. The volunteer's job area is NGO research and development. The placement started in November 1996 and was visited fifteen months later from 22nd - 24th Feb 1998 and on 14th April, 1998.

### Context and aims

Lombok is the main island in the province of NTB (Nusa Tenggara Barat) and has some of the worst quality of life statistics in Indonesia. The island is dominated by a volcano which makes the eastern side very dry, while rapid international tourist development on the western coast is marginalising local people there. Neighbouring Bali is predominantly Hindu, while Lombok is Islamic, once the centre of an ancient and extensive kingdom.

There are many competing local development NGOs on the island, particularly in the western half. The development agency CARE had been here for many years, but were reducing their direct involvement in Lombok, trying to leave a strong NGO network in their place. Having seen volunteers working well in NGOs in the region, the director of CARE suggested that a volunteer could develop enthusiasm for cooperation between NGOs, offer training or help with proposals, and act as a bridge between NGOs and donors. A vehicle for this work was to be the production of an NGO directory listing the aims and resources of each NGO in the area.

As part of their indigenisation programme, CARE had recently formed YSP as one of a number of local partner organisations; they were given day-to-day responsibility for the volunteer. But YSP were new and needed a full-time volunteer themselves, rather than being loaded with responsibility for supporting a volunteer.

Jan had made a successful early career in the management of international software development projects. She made a career change through an MSc in Politics and Sociology, an Ecology and Conservation course and working as a British Trust for Conservation Volunteer. Her long-term interest is environmentalism and 'grassroots organic development', and in her understanding this fits the volunteer agency's stated policy. These fields are difficult to enter without overseas

experience, and volunteering is one step through this barrier. She accepted the placement in Lombok because 'it talked of environmental and grassroots development, the skills required matched my own, and it looked very interesting'.

### Frustrations

The placement had been a disappointment. 'I may not be here [after February] because I do not intend to continue the debacle of my posting beyond that!' (JE, email Jan 1998). One early event stood out for Jan: two days after her arrival, Jan and her volunteer agency programme officer walked into a meeting with leaders of 20 local NGOs, who asked her to explain what the placement was about. 'I thought "whoops! What was going on if they didn't know why I was there?" It wasn't a good start… The trouble was I knew from very early on what was going to go wrong, and I couldn't do a damn thing about it'.

Eight months later and following a discussion with her in Lombok, the volunteer programme officer who set up the placement reports that

> 'Jan is doing well, wants to make more things happen from below, excellent. Accommodative, willing to help. Active local NGOs not yet solid... needs generous applications of time. Seems VSO can't cure all ills
>
> Jan's strengths: 1. Human contact 2. Not bowing to pressure from VSO, other NGOs, CARE to divert from values 3. Participation-led 4. Energy 5. Effort: keeps trying despite hitting wall 6. Within easy reach of anyone in Mataram
>
> Jan's weaknesses: 1. Means of expressing stress 2. Time management when tired 3. Difficulty in focusing 4. Guilt 5. Professional skills, specific advice 6. Language 7. Isolation 8. Transport' [Placement visit report, July 1997, Lom2:3-20].

As regards the 'placement' he was less equivocal.

> 'Placement is proving as difficult and self-starting as expected… Pak Tadi's ideas do seem generally flat and poorly thought-out' [Placement visit report, July 1997, Lom2:24].

Two months' later Jan was definitely struggling to define her role:

> 'Confusion seems to rein [sic] over what I should be doing, who I should be responsible to, who does or doesn't, should or shouldn't know what I am doing and ultimately whether there is any benefit at all' [Letter to programme officer, Sept 1997, Lom2:28].

By January 1998 Jan had just finished the production of her directory of these NGOs, listing their priority areas of work, their stated aims, and demographic and contact information about them. Extracting this information had been a long and exhausting process:

> 'As part of my project I have attempted to involve the LNGOs themselves and to use the project as a form of developing skills of participating organisations… I feel that I have largely failed in this objective - for various reasons including the ambiguity surrounding my posting, the nature of NGOs in Lombok and certain power relationships at play within the NGO community here' [Jan 1998, Lom1:2].

There was consensus from Jan and other partners that the NGO directory would be largely ignored.

### Competing views

The YSP office is located in a small village seven kilometres along the road towards the mountains. Pak Tadi is the head, and he used our interview to set some of the record straight; a

rare opportunity to hear straight talking from a frustrated volunteer host. From the beginning he situated the volunteer in relation to an Indonesian skill shortage. Local NGOs including YSP need training etc, and really there are already Indonesian people with the necessary skills. But they are so much in demand that they are very expensive; a cheaper option was to have a volunteer.

> 'Beyond the expressed hopes for the directory etc., or perhaps inside them, was the expectation of not just meetings to talk, but also of training. But the volunteer herself had very high targets, and some of the local NGOs were less than clear of the purpose of the placement. So that there was no meeting of expectations. Simple local NGOs for example, would have liked an example of how to do a good proposal, a theoretical example' [Pak Tadi, Feb 1998, Lom3:17].

The trouble was, he said, that their input as hosts in terms of time, attention and direction to the volunteer was greater than the output they received. So they were losing out. The placement was not being continued:

> 'To look at the potential benefits, there should be many, but because of many claims on her time, the output is small. Jan has to go to many meetings... It would be better, more useful perhaps, if she had a more specific role or target. Whereas the volunteer's idea in that case was that she should spend a week going through a real example, from start to finish, until it became a concrete reality. Local NGOs in NTB are quite slow, and they wanted an example first, how to do a good proposal, a reasonable expectation. The problem there for the volunteer was that it would be hard to measure the outcome. 'I want to take it right through'. So there was no way through to a meeting of expectations. Neither side would move. The local NGOs thought that it would be a waste of time to go through the whole process, and the volunteer thought it a waste of time not to' [Pak Tadi, Lom3:19].

Flexibility was a practical necessity for successful cooperation between organisation and volunteer:

> 'There were some characteristics that we suggested at the time of asking for a volunteer: that he or she should be flexible, easily integrate, join in with what local NGOs were doing. Should not be too egotistical. As it turned out, we often got into discussions that couldn't be resolved… A volunteer should be flexible, ready for all eventualities, all possibilities'…
>
> 'What was wanted, hoped for, was a kind of sharing, on a day-to-day basis. With the suggestion of teaching English, not to sit down with blackboard etc., but at least to talk, to try to encourage some people. But Jan's reaction was to refuse and say they should look for an English teacher. In England maybe people think quickly and set targets very high, but here, necessarily slower. Perhaps what would take a month in the UK may take a year here' [Pak Tadi, Lom3:34-36].

Was Pak Tadi saying here that they were slow, or that the volunteer was hasty? Issues emerge simultaneously: the focus of the placement, the rate of change in NTB, and the strength of purpose of the volunteer.

Jan notes that many volunteers are asked to 'teach English', on the assumption that this is a reasonable extra role for any native speaker, and that a magical process will ensue whereby colleagues gain English skills without the time and effort normally associated with language learning (JE, comments on draft case study, Jan 1999). Meanwhile, Jan was running her project alone:

'Jan has worked with 8 people in different NGOs. Lack of full time counterpart and disintegration of YSP has left Jan with a lot of the time-consuming administration and logistical work that she would rather someone else do' (16th July, 1997: Placement visit report, B.M.)

Jan was focusing her work in line with her principles, which she believed the agency shared:

'The job description was to work with all NGOs. The volunteer agency's mission is to help the poorest and most marginalised… not necessarily the same as the select 20 in West Lombok. The whole problem in NTB is elitism, a problem which would have been exacerbated by focusing on these twenty' (JE, Jan 1999, comments on draft case study).

Jan's ongoing analysis in Lombok suggested that compromising to avoid conflict would only add to the major problems that she saw in the pattern of development in the island. Not surprisingly, YSP saw the appropriate target group a little differently:

'We really wanted to restrict the placement to West Lombok, where there are about twenty NGOs. But many local NGOs here have limited resources. When the volunteer was here, the others all wanted to benefit as well' (interview, Pak Tadi, 23rd February, 1998)

CARE Lombok have a temporary home in this office. A group interview there took on the nature of an informal debriefing, where volunteer and staff could air some of their frustrations and views. Staff came in and out of the discussion, which was dominated by a young and open caretaker manager, Pak Jon. He had arrived a year earlier, after 6 years with CARE in East Timor. Jan agreed with my assessment that this meeting had been an open exchange. She added that it hadn't been like that earlier; that there had been no possibility of sitting down to find a productive way forward. She could have done business with Jon.

It is interesting to compare the different roles played by these two outsiders to Lombok. Pak Jon was located inside an organisation, he is Indonesian, a professional NGO worker. Whereas Jan has no community base. Their respective positions become clearer in an interchange as Jan defends her position and explains the problem of unclear definition of her role.

Jon: Volunteers should be working not in program implementation, but in management support and training.

Jan: NGOs already had loads of training! Training courses everywhere, all over NTB.

Jon: Yes, but what about after, what about follow-up, they need more than a course.

Jan: It's impossible to follow up in all areas. I must concentrate on one, perhaps health.

Jon: Or management.

Jan: But with just me here, perhaps 25 years wouldn't be enough.

Jon: But some NGOs already have experience, they're not all starting from nothing.

Jan: Yeah, some need help with spreadsheets, some with strategic planning... it's still far too wide a brief. So the job must be clearly defined. (interview, Pak Jon and JE, 23rd February, 1998)

Why must it be clearly defined? Because Jan felt the pressure from stakeholders to produce measurable outputs. Jon seems happy to concentrate on inputs and process. But they agree on the problem, and on the scale of any solution based on direct intervention in existing NGOs:

Jan: Local NGOs are in competition, they're not ready to communicate outside, they can't be bothered, some of them. They don't want information, to be given addresses to contact:

> they want solutions! There are symptoms of this: meetings where nobody turned up, different people attending successive meetings, no follow up, no communication.
>
> Jon: Yeah, that's the culture. That needs time to change. That needs intensive work with one group of people [Pak Jon and JE, February 1998, Lom2:74]

Jan comments later: 'The symptoms were not what I necessarily aimed to change. But they did stand in the way of achieving expectations, both mine and the NGOs' (JE, feedback on case study, January 1999).

### Detached views

> 'Was YSP the right place to put me, with one low-power computer, and there is Pak Suhardi down the road laughing?' (interview, JE, February 1998)

Pak Suhardi is the leader of LP3ES (Institution for Social Research, Training and Development), a relatively powerful consultancy with government funding. Having come from Jakarta ten years earlier, he is a big fish in the small Lombok pond. A volunteer that had been working in Pak Suhardi's organisation told me later that

> 'They were doing good work on forestry policy etc. But they were too much in with the government perhaps, for instance in transmigration studies, and community development around the Sumbawa goldmine...' [Frank, Lom6:60]

Pak Suhardi is not directly involved in the placement, and I take his perspective to be that of an informed local outsider from an organisation which in some ways rivals CARE. As he saw it, CARE were unclear from the beginning about their aims with this placement:

> 'There are existing networks and directories, and so making another was 'unpopular', because the existing ones seemed to have had no benefit. '"You will be frustrated" I told Jan. CARE didn't give her the support she needed, or introduce her in a way that people would take notice. The problem is NGOs, not the lack of directory… There are or have been about 276 local NGOs in NTB, but only about 20 of those are functioning, the others existing as a name and an office only. What the failing ones need is program support' [Pak Suhardi, Feb 1998, Lom6:17].

Volunteers need somebody with an interest and a 'guiding hand' over them, but many NGOs here do not pay the volunteer wages and do not feel able to take this management role. Several volunteers that Pak Suhardi has seen in that kind of situation suffer in silence and then get disillusioned, withdraw from work and live out their placement as tourists. Jan is fairer he says: she keeps on trying to do something, and expresses her frustration so that others know and may do something about it.

Jan has established closer working relationships with Pak Yuri, who runs a small local NGO and is known as the 'wise old owl'. He does not consider that Jan is at fault for the difficulties of the placement. But then he draws on her wide experience, which is something others do not. He told me:

> 'Jan is committed. She is a very appropriate person - why? because we can learn from each other. The problem has been, she was placed for all, rather than just for just six or eight NGOs. I have learnt a lot from her, she has been very useful. For example, about the importance of being systematic, in writing, working and making a program. We share a vision: and one of the problems is that many other NGOs here don't share that, they are

> only interested in income-generation and so on. Jan wants to engage in transformation of knowledge, associated with conceptual change…
>
> 'Jan has been really extremely useful… I can fit into her program, a discussion or a field trip, as long as I give her enough notice. And it's also important to share other experience, such as the pattern and methods of education, governance, etc. in Holland, UK, Russia etc. Jan has a lot of information about political systems, and is ready to discuss with anyone that she gets on with' (Pak Yuri, Feb 1998, Lom4:29-31].

Jan may be more flexible with Pak Yuri than with others, and she knew him well enough to have the measure of his rhetoric. In our interview he had mentioned his suggestion that Jan join him providing intensive support for small NGOs in North Lombok; she later remarked 'fine, but he wanted me to write the proposal'. But she respects him, hypothesising that given more volunteers it could have been an effective strategy to develop strong NGOs like his who were committed to strengthening others in the interests of development (personal communication, January 1999).

Jan seems to have acted as consultant, not as located person; she recognised the need for such location in order to achieve any change. She commented in passing to Jon in CARE that none of the staff ever took phone messages for others. He replied that you can't force people to change like that. Jan's comment shows that she appreciates the importance of a situated role:

> 'EXACTLY - that's why a BROAD role doesn't work… it lacks the one-on-oneness that enables subtlety not force.'

The main story of this placement is that Jan stuck firmly to the original idea of the placement and tried to make it work. Jan stressed the reasons for this later:

> 'The philosophy and goals of the volunteer agency are the reason for which I joined: working with the poorest and most marginalised, sharing skills, and working together for a better world' (JE, comments on draft case study, Jan 1999).

But the difficulties outlined in this study had prevented Jan from developing a working relationship with the local NGO workers who had originated the placement. A final specific example concerns the issue of English teaching in YSP. Jan had told him to ask for a volunteer English teacher:

> 'Logically it's right, but she can also do something in the meantime; but maybe she was afraid of making mistakes, and was thinking at too high a level, so immediately thought, you need an expert' [Pak Tadi, Feb 1998, Lom3:37].

Logic, order, consistency are part of Tadi's perception of Jan's character. He tentatively interprets her refusal as indicative of her personal fear of being inadequate outside her expertise. He had hoped for far more flexibility from the volunteer. But he is wrong about Jan's reasoning:

> 'If the NGO staff had been really determined to learn English, there were plenty of opportunities in Lombok, good schools and teachers, even possibilities of funding. Conceding… where the resources and opportunities already exist would not only be a waste of resource (ie. my time) but another 'hand-out'… In resource-rich West Lombok this has been the development model, which has not resulted in strong development organisations or long-lasting project effects' (JE, comments on draft case study, Jan 1999).

Neither does Jan recognise herself in Tadi's description:

> 'Logical, ordered, consistent are not characteristics I displayed in Lombok - perhaps Tadi's statement is indicative of his own capacity to judge people and situations… and the problem YSP was suffering' (JE, comments on draft case study, Jan 1999).

Transforming the development world of Lombok, where practitioners are demotivated and cynical about the need to tell half-truths to get funding, would be a supreme achievement in development practice. This case study shows why such a change was too much to expect from a volunteer placement. It is a story of non-participation, ironic in a placement set up to facilitate participation between different and competing groups.

On the other hand Jan became highly visible in Lombok, since the placement was located right on the faultline running through the NGO world in Lombok. She is known to all the major NGO leaders in the provincial capital Mataram. That being the case, there were conflicting perspectives about what had happened since that early NGO meeting, perspectives to which I had some access through interviews with various interested parties as the last few weeks of the placement approached. People seemed more willing than usual to be open with me about difficulties. The interviews appeared to perform a function of finishing off some business.

I gained the impression of a very determined character in Jan: witness an extraordinary journey across NTT that she completed on a bike that she had brought out from the UK. Other volunteers that I spoke to saw her as very capable. Jan hasn't flinched from the implications of her ideas in the context in which she works, which has contributed to conflict with people whose real world is more local and concrete. Theories of development don't deal with the features of a context like NTB, where development has turned on itself to become part of the problem.

Jan referred to the 'legacy of development' in an interview in February 1998; she had explained it earlier when writing about the difficulties she was experiencing:

> 'It's taken 25 years of international aid to create the many problems there are with local NGOs in Lombok... and little me can't make a dent in a year' (letter from volunteer to CARE country director, 31st July 1997)

So Jan was determined, and in the end isolated. She tried to work in the spirit of VSO's mission and vision which embraces participatory methods and skill sharing as its underlying foundation. Her commitment to these objectives made the job in and of itself very difficult to carry out. There was no one community in Lombok to which Jan is answerable, or in which she was at home. But this is a function not only of the development situation in Lombok; the character and background of the volunteer is also highly relevant here. The volunteer agency makes much of the effectiveness of volunteers: the job description creates the impression of an developed role for a volunteer, rhetoric to which Jan was disposed with her background in project management. Perhaps Jan was naive in accepting of the rhetoric of matching skills, given that the difference in context introduces such a discontinuity. She commented later: 'I guess I never thought enough about what it would take (organisations, structures, people) to be able to use and share my skills' (JE, notes, Feb 1998). Later she returned to the importance of matching skills as a role of the volunteer agency:

> 'I think it is important to point out that the volunteer agency's role is to assess needs and skills to fill those needs accurately then to fill the position based on these and other criteria which it deems important… Personally I think that the volunteer agency missed the target in this respect which is probably one of the many reasons that the position was less successful than others' (comments on second draft report, JE, 19th Jan 1999).

Towards the end of the Lombok placement, Jan's professional life depended on her computer and a few local intellectuals, and sharing disappointment with other volunteers. There can be little common ground where there is little shared experience, and within the Lombok NGO world, all that Jan had the chance to share is her ideas, not herself. After leaving Lombok, Jan worked for some months in an environmental NGO in Bali; she had been concerned that their expectations might also be problematic for her: 'Will they be happy to work with me in the way I want, not doing things for them but assisting development?'.

Her fears about another disappointment seemed to be groundless; in the Bali NGO I heard tales of Jan receiving a massage in the office after climbing the volcano one weekend, and plenty of laughter. Within a couple of months of starting she was producing a thoroughly grounded policy document, and taking part in a waste recycling project. In this situated context, Jan fitted easily and productively into a team.

### A focus on social resources and learning

The initial distribution of resources in this case was different again. Jan's position was ambiguous from the start: she was not particularly welcome in the institution in which she was placed. A critical meeting early on revealed a lack of coordinated planning for the placement by the NGO network involved. There was ongoing conflict over the distribution of her time, and no forum for coordinated negotiations over this; the location of her base proved unsuitable, transport was a problem for her, and she lacked help with administration. The directory that Jan produced was an attempt to promote informed sharing of existing expertise around the NGO network; but the demands of this resource-hungry group of NGOs proved problematic; leaders of stronger NGOs observed this process with an ironic smile whilst the others grew frustrated.

> 'They [NGOs] can probably justify whatever they are doing somehow, but Jan sees many of them as giving themselves jobs… When the massively-resourced CARE started to pull out of Lombok, there was a rush to form local NGOs to fill the gap, especially the gap for NGO trained labour. YSP really came from there. The story is of massively under-resourced local NGOs ('with two or three staff') agreeing to take on AIDS/HIV, dry land farming, women's health, baby inoculation... anything in order to get funding. In that context, establishing a network of NGOs, pooling expertise in certain areas, working together in a co-ordinated way, is very difficult (to say the least)' [fieldnotes, Lom1:50-53].

As Jan positioned herself as a facilitator of change in an effort to avoid elitism and continued dependence, leaders of the less established NGOs demanded a more direct assisting role. For example, her base organisation asked for her help in teaching English. Jan's analysis of the situation led her to refuse compromises, which in turn led her to be positioned by some as an inflexible outsider, lacking in understanding of the particular context and culture. Negotiation was notably absence throughout the placement; there was little redistribution of time, material, space, information or social positioning.

Jan found allegiance with others sharing her analytical position, and developed her own network of people disillusioned with the mainstream of development in Lombok. The manager of the NGO she subsequently worked with in Bali perceived this cultural understanding to be a major learning point for Jan:

> 'I think she is learning more about the culture of different places in Indonesia. Lombok and Bali are only separated by a single channel of water, but the difference is enomous, isn't it? Maybe the volunteer is learning that although Bali and Lombok are very close, the culture is really extremely different. Then also the environment that she was working in there is very different from this one, so that before she may have said, 'Oh, maybe all Indonesians are like this' now she can see that it's not like that. She has a different experience through this placement' [Yuyun, Bali, April 1998, Lom5:42-43].

Back in the UK, Jan reflected carefully on the position of volunteers in Indonesia in broader terms:

> 'Should VSO be there? Look at it in the light of revelations coming into the open - was VSO and UK money not used to reinforce the goals of the Soeharto regime? This raises another issue however; that perhaps the underlying aims of organisations such as VSO cannot be stated or fully appreciated within the context of the role they play as volunteers - but much more in the long term effects. If this is the case, VSO should come clean to its stakeholders.. or more importantly with the volunteers, priming them to be benign actors in a wider schema - not to be agents of change, but catalysts'.

Trying to identify just what she and other volunteers have contributed through their placements, Jo employs notions from the discourse of development, in the hope that the volunteer agency can reduce the ambiguity in its purpose at different levels of policy. These issues will be considered further in the final chapter.

### Reflection on these case studies

These four case studies are descriptive accounts of placements which have been subject to scrutiny by their participants. They were written as descriptions of processes in these placements from the perspectives of different participants and the researcher. To focus on learning, social resources have been used to highlight links between different levels of the processes described. Learning in the first three placements is a process which is contingent on the distribution of social resources and which contributes to their meaning. This meaning is then seen to affect their distribution as the placement progresses. In the fourth placement, social resources are not significantly redistributed, and the learning process is quite different. And yet it seems clear that strong learning has gone on here too. Situations most resonant with learning appear to be those where there is conflict or difference in the meaning of social resources. In the next chapter, these case study accounts are used to elaborate the framework of learning constructed in the first part of the thesis.

# Chapter Six: The Learning Framework: boundaries, transgression and community

In this chapter, I revisit and develop some of the themes which emerged in the first four chapters in the light of the case studies, developing the focus on the processes of learning that are going on in the placement. One interpretation of the case studies is that they describe the extent to which participants of different social worlds manage to construct a meaningful engagement. Within the case studies, many kinds of boundaries become apparent: boundaries based on gender and ethnic origin; boundaries of competence and trust; boundaries marking the limit of resources including information and material resources of various kinds. Boundaries are markers of social organisation, and they are significant in processes that lead to placement outcomes. Learning processes in the placement need to be seen in relation to these boundaries.

In Chapter Two we saw how the maintenance of social world boundaries is integral to the continuation of the worlds of volunteering and practices, such as teaching and medicine in Indonesia. Boundaries have similarly been understood as of primary importance to the maintenance of ethnic groups (Barth, 1969), and to have implications for the behaviour of members: 'the ethnic boundary canalizes social life… the identification of another person as a fellow member of an ethnic group implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgement…a dichotomization of others as strangers… implies a recognition of limitations on shared understandings… ' (ibid. p.15). In this chapter I want to situate these identity-defining boundaries as part of a more general framework which can explain the development and outcomes of the placement as described in the case studies. Such a framework must include an understanding of the ways in which boundaries are variously taken for granted, hidden, crossed and defended.

## Classification, accounts and social resources

A starting point for the understanding of boundaries in the context of volunteer placements is the concept of 'classification', a concept developed by Bernstein (1996) through his work on pedagogy and difference:

> 'Classification was used to refer to the relations between categories, these relations being given by their degree of insulation from each other. Thus strong insulation created categories, clearly bounded, with a space for the development of a specialized identity, whereas the weaker the insulation, the less specialized the category. The key to the category relations, be these categories of discourses, practices or agencies, was insulation… I argued that power relations maintained the degree of insulation and thus the principle of the classification' (p.101).

Barth's (1969) account of ethnic groups suggests that they depend on classification for their continuity, in the sense that maintenance of the boundary through differentiating outsiders is more fundamental than the shared cultural content of the group. But classification is not limited to the maintenance of such groups; it has wider significance in terms of who can know what and when; who can get what, when, and where; who can go where, when, with whom, and who can exchange what, when, where and with whom. These effects on the distribution of resources mean that some classification is associated with the production and maintenance of inequalities. Bernstein suggests

that classifications are maintained by people whose interests are served by them; if not actively maintained, they are vigorously defended when they are under threat. Classification of resources is associated with not only with the maintenance of identity, but with differences in power.

As introduced in the fourth chapter, social resources (time, place, material resources, information and social positioning) signify those elements of social life which are necessarily distributed through social interaction; as resources, they are also highly significant in terms of the outcomes of development processes. The distribution of social resources in any given moment and setting is not a matter of account but of fact, and this distribution represents power because it determines opportunities for future action. For example, in terms of material resources, Jane in West Timor rode her motorbike instead of being persuaded to ride pillion behind her male colleague, with consequences for their relationship. In terms of information, nearly all volunteers struggle to get feedback on their work from an Indonesian boss, which influences their understanding of their position in the institution. On positioning, Phil found that 'teachers… who are 'well in' talk to me less… [I'm closest to] Elin and Ur, they are both on the edge' [EL11:7]. This affected Phil's trajectory through the institution.

Participants' accounts evolve as significant personal constructions, performing important social functions integral to the learning process in the placement. Accounts are powerful in their construction of similarity, difference, normality and identity. Davies and Harre (1990) see stories as resources that structure interpretation during interaction. Participants' accounts fill the gaps that the social interaction does not complete in order to make sense of the world. In Davies and Harre's terms, participants weave accounts together from various available stories: David developed an account of the hardworking community; Jan, of the fundamental mismatch of aims; Alicia, of the coincidence initiating the placement and Phil of the disinterest of the school leadership in his work.

> 'Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned' (Davies and Harre 1990, p.47).

We saw in case study IV how powerful accounts can come to dominate the placement, determining all possibilities for action. But individuals are not caught in one position:

> 'An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate… Stories are located within a number of different discourses, and thus vary dramatically in terms of the language used, the concepts, issues and moral judgements made relevant and the subject positions made available within them' (Davies and Harre 1990, p.47).

In themselves, both accounts and distribution of resources can be seen as conditions for learning. They are linked in a learning cycle: social resources are meaningful for participants; their distribution in combination is achieved through social interaction, and this interaction stimulates the development of accounts, as where in the first case study, the brothers develop their accounts of David after he goes into town to see the results of the riot. In turn, accounts influence the

interactions through which social resources are distributed and redistributed, as in the second case study where Phil and Elin's collaboration is maintained and developed by their account of good science teaching.

As understood here, learning involves the relationship between accounts and the distribution of resources. As conditions for learning, social resources and accounts both link to the significant outcomes of the placement. I use them first to explore further the concept of classification in relation to culture.

## Culture as classification

We saw in Chapter Three how accounts of classification along cultural lines can be influential; how all differences between self and other, particularly deviations from participants' expectations of the other, can be interpreted in the light of 'cultural difference'. In this account, culture becomes reified as part of reality, an attribute attaching to people, particularly those who are different from us, so that to learn about others is to gain knowledge about them and their culture. In the case studies, for example, David told me how he thought that 'living in a Muslim community would give me a wider insight, and this comes back a little to the learning. Because I don't know much about cultures other than England and Catholicism' (pre-departure, July 1997). Both Ibu Elin and Frater Yanuarius told me that the main learning of their volunteer colleagues had been about culture (EL2: 86, EL10:71). The explanation of Jan's colleague for the 'meetings where nobody turned up, no follow up, no communication' was 'that's the culture. That needs time to change. That needs intensive work with one group of people' (Lom2:74). Chapter Four showed how I also participated in this type of explanation of difference, during fieldwork. Reflecting on my placement in a case study [Appendix I] I realise that I did the same as a volunteer. In the process of applying this perspective, the notion of culture becomes increasingly mysterious, and the more mysterious it is, the more powerful it becomes as an explanation of differences. As an account that classifies, culture then influences the way people are positioned and time is spent.

In the first case study, Frater Yanuarius reported that there had been 'problems and difficulties' between David and the other teachers of English; earlier he referred to their refusal to observe David's lessons, and David found later that they did not take up opportunities for team teaching. A barrier insulated David from those teachers, impeding the flow of information and keeping separate their teaching spaces; they appeared to spend time together only in the staffroom. As the placement progressed and the barrier was maintained, David's account of cultural difference became stronger: 'I think there will always be a distance, perhaps from culture, perhaps from the fact that they perceive me as a native speaker and therefore more proficient in the language than they are' [EL30:11]. David gave up the idea of team teaching and put his efforts into developing workshops for teachers on Saturday mornings.

One of the Indonesian friends I had made during my placement in Irian Jaya was John. He recently translated the case study of my placement into Indonesian; when I subsequently invited him to reflect on my arrival as a volunteer in Irian Jaya, he wrote a letter in which he accounted for most of the tensions between us in terms of cultural difference. Reflection is not a common mode of

writing for an Indonesian, and I quote this letter at some length, contrasting it with parts of my own account [Appendix I]. These accounts of my early days in Merauke suggest that a classification according to culture is part of the framework supported by John's account and resisted in mine. I interpret the interplay between such conflicting accounts and the distribution of social resources in terms of potential for learning.

> 'The beginning of February 1993 was the first time Andy arrived in Merauke. Certainly every newcomer is always confused or even hesitates how to begin a life in a new place, let alone he is a foreigner… Being a foreigner there in such a little town, surely, it's very easy to get attention. For Andy, to get a lot of attention each day really make him upset because that's a new experience for him.... Fortunately he could understand it little by little… I met Andy for the first time only one week after he moved to his new place... Surely I was very happy to meet him… We were not friends since then because for Andy as a foreigner it was not that easy to trust somebody to be a good friend…'

In the case study of my placement, I quoted from my diary written at that time: ‘I have to keep on trusting people, knowing that I am very vulnerable. It’s not an option though and my vulnerability itself is subjective. I’m just noting that one instinct was to say no, go away, because you don’t fit the image.. you’re too anxious to please…(28 Feb, 1993)'. John's explanation for my lack of trust was that I was foreign, whereas my account focused on the particular behaviour of would-be friends.

> 'Andy, as a figure of a foreign teacher, came to Merauke with special mission and a lot of ideas. I think he has problem like what I can say 'culture shock’ He found everything was strange for him. He was always surrounded by little kids. The kids always made noise; it was not usual for him to live in a crowded circumstance. That is very different from what usually in England… Andy was very astonished that I have such a big family and we could still stay in one house even some of them have got married. Other thing that made him surprised that my mother doesn’t remarry after three years my father died. He thought like in Europe that a widow like my mother would marry again…'

I have no recollection of this astonishment, nor do I recognise the assumption about remarriage as one that I would make. There is no hint of it in my diary from that time.

> 'He is a bit vulnerable; I mean he is easy to get upset or iritated. We quite often quarrelled. I think it's because of misunderstanding. He comes from another country and culture so it’s possible could happen. And what I do like from him is that is always at first place to declare his apology even though it was my fault. I learnt a lot from him. I mean I learnt a bit of western world, attitude and culture…'

I suggest that the significance of these contrasting accounts requires that they are seen in relation to the distribution of social resources: after all, both accounts describe how John and I shared time, materials and information together, and saw each other as friends. Yet the interpretive framework of John's letter is one of difference, whereas my account is of shared interest. In my case study I describe the recognition of partially shared understanding with John, and the opportunities taken to share frustrations and problems:

> '… he treated me as an elder brother that he could talk to about life, relationships, ambitions; I was able to share with him those burdens of news that came in letters from the UK, and more of my criticisms of ways of doing things in Merauke than I could with many others'

In contrast, John identifies my difference from the stance of one who sees himself born into a specific culture. For him, the concept of 'culture shock' explains my difficulty in coming to terms with the distribution of resources in my neighbourhood and his family home; our 'quarrels' are the result of cultural difference, and he was learning about that difference. Classification according to culture is not the prerogative of the travelling Westerner (Furnham and Bochner, 1989). Wherever it appears, though, it is a classification whose value and dominance we should question, to understand better in whose interests it is maintained.

> 'Relations and processes of domination are central to an explanation of how people – differently positioned – contest the meaning of a situation, use economic and institutional resources available to them at that historical moment to try and make their definition of the situation 'stick', and try to garner the material outcome. It has to be shown how a discourse which defines ideas, things or groups becomes authoritative. This is culture as process' (Wright 1994, p.27)

Ferguson (1990) focused on the construction of culture as part of his critique of development as a system that redefines contexts through powerful accounts without changing the distribution of resources in the way intended.

> 'Refusing the spatial localization and insulation that is created by a "fielded" concept of culture… problematises the "givens" and demands an accounting of why cultures are "different", "exotic", "isolated"… and of how they got to be that way' (p.139).

By analysing the different representations of Lesotho in development and academic discourse, he shows how the development account constructs the Government of Lesotho as a legitimate object for World Bank assistance by describing the economic and social isolation of Lesotho from South Africa, the country that surrounds it. The integrity of this development account depends fundamentally on the integrity of national boundaries, so the Lesotho people are portrayed as peasant farmers in a predominantly rural economy with little movement of resources across the border. In contrast, the academic account describes how the movement of resources of all kinds across the border has long been essential to Lesotho's economy, particularly the migration of workers to the South African mines and the material resources they bring back into Lesotho. There is a classification supported by evidence of the movement of resources, but it is not the one suggested in the development account: it is between the rich and poor.

Lesotho was wrongly regarded as needing more autonomous development, in the name of which the development project built up the country's roads and other infrastructure. The effect of that construction was very different to that intended by the development experts and very useful to the local elite, for it further opened up Lesotho to South African markets and political control (ibid. p.252). Ferguson suggests that local elites do not resist development when they see that they will benefit.

Anthropological research can generate accounts of classification in the distribution of social resources. For example, Ferguson constructs a representation of the significance of cattle, an aspect of socio-economic life in Lesotho that has been the subject of strong development policy recommendations. By systematically asking those involved with cattle about their social value, he effectively explores some of the social relations entailed in the apparently economic activity of

cattle farming; relations which attest to classification taken for granted by the Sotho themselves. He learnt that cattle are currency for bridewealth, and therefore are useful forms of wealth for a woman with a daughter, although many women told him that they would prefer to sell them to meet the financial costs of education. Ferguson's account of this complex taken-for-granted classification further strengthens his critique of the development account, which had ignored this classification.

Ferguson's (1990) focus is on a massive development programme, which has the potential to shift classifications through the input of material. His account shows that planned change is impossible, insofar as the programme ignores the way that resources are linked and separated through existing classifications; it is an account which has led to considerable debate as to how far this typifies all that might be termed development (Grillo 1997, pp.16-27). I am interested in situations where, instead of a massive externally-funded programme, only an individual outsider is involved. The case studies describe volunteer placements where, unlike the situation in Lesotho, the time and material resources of people in the institutions overwhelmingly outweigh that which the outsider brings.

In the face of those whose interests are served by the maintenance of a given classification of social resources, the individual volunteer lacks the authority and resources with which to redefine the classification implicit in the shared account or institutional agenda, even for the duration of the placement. Some of that classification will relate to the positioning of the volunteer themselves, and influence how and what they can learn. Again, any given classification may be clear and overt to some people in a setting, whilst remaining unknown, hidden, or taken-for-granted for others. What is taken-for-granted by colleagues may be clear to volunteers, and vice versa.

## Classification and the volunteer as individual newcomer - learning as participation

In the volunteer placement, the significance of classification is twofold. Firstly, it is the way that power is distributed through the social system; classification is embedded within networks of meaning and interaction, largely taken-for-granted by participants, which are to the advantage of some and the disadvantage of others. Secondly, since we are considering situations involving a newcomer to that social system, classification structures the opportunities for learning; in a community of practice, 'the social structure of this practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning' (Lave and Wenger 1991, p.98). For example, access to information is embedded in existing routines, practices, identities and relationships.

People live their lives governed by classifications of social resources, and many of these classifications are taken for granted and unarticulated. Before each case study placement started, there was an existing network of resources, a resource system, with local meanings linking people, places, material, time, information together in particular ways and through particular processes. I introduced Lave and Wenger's (1991) notion of 'legitimate peripheral participation' in Chapter Three, a distribution of social resources which facilitates learning between apprentices and old timers within a community of practice, and I want to explore now how far this is a useful notion for understanding learning in the classified context of volunteer placements. Such a community is

seen to reproduce and develop through the learning of new participants as they construct identities as members.

An individual Westerner arrives in an institution in Indonesia, a school, hospital or NGO. The context of learning is initially one of mutual ignorance: neither volunteer nor Indonesian colleagues begin with much knowledge or understanding of the way each other sees the world, nor are they there to engage in social research, unlike Ferguson investigating the local meanings of cattle in Lesotho. They meet with plenty of mutual interest, and assumptions about each other, but colleagues' accounts and familiar distributions of resources are unfamiliar to the volunteer, and vice versa. This mutual ignorance is strengthened by and sometimes attributed to a lack of shared language:

> 'Our powers of persuasion and explanation, it seems, stop at the borders of our own localities. It is our shared practices that enable us to be persuaded and persuade, to be explainers, or to justify and have the justifications accepted' (Turner 1994, p.11)

However, the case studies show how mutual ignorance is disguised by a commitment to action, such is the strength of the common expectation that volunteer and colleagues will 'get things done together'. Volunteers and colleagues generally expect that volunteers will develop identities as participants in the community of practice, moving their position in relation to the classification of member/non-member. As a process of identity construction, this is a powerful and motivating expectation (Lave and Wenger 1991, pp.110-112). When the retired headteacher at Aru (case study II) describes Phil's learning, he talks about a process which led to Phil teaching practical science so that 'now he is a real teacher, although only for practical lessons'. He goes on to describe Phil's interaction: 'working together with other teachers, his language improves, and if he wants to extend, he's very welcome... his interaction with everyone is polite, fun, and he is of the same faith, which probably makes things easier'. Here he relates the development of Phil's language and his religious identity to the quality of his participation and his identity as a teacher. This and other case studies describe placements in which volunteers are repositioned as participants, though not fully. We know quite a lot about the conditions under which this change in position occurs, and the implications for the community.

In the community of practice, learning is understood not as an outcome of a planned curriculum, or under the control of any one 'master'; mastery is located 'in the organisation of the community of practice' (Lave and Wenger 1991, p.94). Bourdieu warns that when an outsider asks about practice, the answer they will receive from the best informants consists of 'learned ignorance [which] can only give rise to the misleading discourse of a speaker himself misled, ignorant both of the objective truth about his practical mastery (which is that it is ignorant of its own truth) and of the true principle of the knowledge his practical mastery contains' (1977 p.18). The case studies indicate that a great deal of learning in the volunteer placement does not occur under conditions of formal instruction. Early in Alicia's placement for instance, she and her boss agreed that she would spend several weeks going around the local villages, observing the way houses were used. Perhaps Marcus's experience as a colleague of the previous volunteer, Sarah, made him particularly aware of the need to give Alicia this freedom to learn.

Since many existing classifications are taken for granted, no one in the institution sits down with the new volunteer to teach him or her the ways in which social resources are organised. It feels to some volunteers that there should be such an explanation; David (case study I) specifically commented to me that at the very least, he expected some joint planning on how he would fit in. At Dola, the community of brothers and wider teaching staff represent communities within a community, and for David, the conditions for legitimacy proved to be quite complex. David began by spending all his time teaching English as native speaker, a role that the school constructs for him. Through negotiation and the intervention of the visiting volunteer programme officer, David began to liaise with teachers and other colleagues in the school. Meanwhile, his participation in community prayers and in community visits outside the school, initially a matter of note both for him and his colleagues, became accepted and taken-for-granted. The case study ended with the sense of confident participation on the part of both David and his colleague Frater Yanuarius, but the classification between inside and outside the school remains strong. David told me how my

> 'request for information prompted a special meeting with Frater Yanuarius one evening in the biara…. I wonder whether that conversation would have taken place had you not asked for specific information…. he was asking me questions about how I felt about working in the school, did I think we were achieving things, what might be done to improve the school, how did the school compare with other schools and so on' [EL30:66].

Developing an identity as a member of a community of practice is dependent on social access to members of the community. Occasions for such volunteers' identity construction included coffee breaks and informal meetings with staff after work. Phil noted that he felt at home in the staffroom, unlike the previous volunteer; such accounts are useful indicators of the learning and status of participants (ibid. p.108). One of the key concerns of a volunteer programme officer in Jakarta was the advent of lap-tops: 'Computers provide the short-term attractive option of working efficiently in the quiet and security of their own home, away from the stress of cross-cultural meeting' [jak3:11]. This was having the effect of isolating volunteers from their colleagues. Jane's boss in West Timor told me:

> 'She often works alone, yes. She does come to the office every day, except Saturday when she works at home. She needs to use the computer, and comes in afternoons, evenings, flexible. To begin with, she seemed to want to work alone more often: but I said that we want a team, and we can't have that if you work on your own all the time. You're here to train them. And Jane understood that'. [T6:39]

Part of the learning associated with the arrival of a newcomer involves artefacts, the meaning of which is not given, but rather has to be derived from their use and history in that community (Lave and Wenger 1991, p.101-102). The meaning of a computer, for instance, depends on the distribution of resources that is entailed in its use. The relative lack of computers in the NGO in which Jan was placed (case study IV) supported her initial sense of misplacement; by the end of the placement her own laptop was her main place of work. The meaning that the language laboratory at Dola (case study I) had for some of the community there (a signifier of status) gradually became clear to David, when he understood through conversations with colleagues that it had never been used for teaching languages. For him it constituted the incapability and laziness of those who couldn't mend or didn't bother to use it. Newcomers can also change the meaning of

artefacts: to persuade teachers to use 'low status' local materials for science equipment is to expose them to new learning opportunities, but also to challenge their professional status, and their perception of the volunteer [Appendix I].

Learning through participation is a gradual process. 'There has crept into our analysis, as we have moved away from conventional notions of learning, an expanded scale of time and a more encompassing view of what constitutes learning activity… the gradual process of fashioning identity as a full practitioner…' (ibid. p.121). This need to focus on an expanded scale of time is evident in the gradual change that occurs for David and his colleagues, which is only evident to them over a period of 18 months. The same is true in other placements. In terms of classification, the ‘fashioning of identity’ is seen to be a matter of redistribution of social resources to include the newcomer, but also the construction of new accounts of the newcomer by both themselves and their colleagues.

Examples from case studies have demonstrated the applicability of legitimate peripheral participation to the volunteer placement. Yet the social context of learning in these placements is often far from the ideal open community that Lave and Wenger have been said to assume (Tennant 1997, pp.77-79). Volunteers arrive in placements having been members of a community of practice in a related area, and their identity as practitioners in that community contributes to conflict over classifications in the placement community. In the fourth case study, senior development professionals but also Jan herself initially expected her placement to be a solution to the problems of the development community [Lom2:30]. Volunteers sometimes feel that change in the institution becomes their responsibility alone. Most colleagues have less personal investment in the placement, and their initial expectations are generally much lower. While Phil (case study II) strives for improvement in science teaching, Frater Marianus considers the low cost of the placement and finds it good value if it caused no problems.

The classification in participants' accounts between belief and knowledge is surprisingly powerful. Duveen (1990) suggests that 'knowledge' is a tool of the minority for having social influence in the face of majority 'beliefs'. Certainly colleagues such as Ibu Elin (case study II), explained the value of the volunteer in terms of their knowledge: 'I feel that his [Phil's] knowledge is sufficiently excellent (begitu bagus) that I can learn a lot' [EL10:81]. Yuri understood that 'Jan wants to engage in transformation of knowledge, associated with conceptual change' [Lom4:16]. Meanwhile, volunteers and their close colleagues commonly perceive a community's classifications as expressions of consensual beliefs in contrast with their own knowledge. For instance, David learnt about the uneven distribution of educational opportunities in Flores: 'Quite a number of the male teachers have been in Roman Catholic seminaries…therefore they have been trained by different teachers in pronunciation, grammar, structure.. the women have usually gone to teacher training college or in one case, she started off as a (tourist) guide' [EL30:11]. David perceived that this classification along lines of gender was maintained partly through the male teachers' account. 'I asked her where were you educated, did you go to teacher training college? No she said, I more or less taught myself. Now I think it's unfair when later I overhear a conversation between her other

colleagues about her level of competence. I look at it from the point of view that she's done fantastically well to get to the level that she has… I would say that 90% of what she's written is correct. And the meaning is usually right' [EL30:11].

This example of women kept on the periphery reminds us that increasing participation in a community is dependent on general acceptance of the existing members. The community's definition of competence is powerful because competence is not only a technical matter; it is also a necessary, if not sufficient, qualification for membership of that community. The investment of personal identity in community membership ensures that the 'regime of competence' (Wenger 1998, pp.152-153) is carefully policed. In this case it appears that the community the regime of competence is gendered. David perceives a strong relationship between the male teachers' beliefs, the positioning of women teachers and the resources allocated to their training. Talking with me, David challenges the validity of the male teachers' account, though how far he challenged them directly is not clear. What is open to David and other volunteers when others' classifications dominate the social order is what de Certeau (1984) terms 'tactics' rather than 'strategies'. Unlike strategies, 'a tactic insinuates itself into the other's place, fragmentarily, without taking it over in its entirety… a tactic depends on time… it is always on the watch for opportunities' (p.xix). Scott's (1985) ethnographic study of the tactics peasants use to resist change exemplifies this notion of tactic for people in a relatively powerless position. A strategic approach to the placement on the part of the volunteer would rarely achieve planned outcomes, because of initially unknown classifications such as this gendered account. Challenge to existing classification, such as Phil (case study II) made in relation to the school leadership's approach to women teachers, is a matter of resistance which evolves as that classification is revealed. Lave and Wenger's (1991) focus on everyday interaction as a forum for learning fits comfortably with this concept of tactical resistance: 'Shared participation is the stage on which the old and the new, the known and the unknown, the established and the hopeful, act out their differences and discover their commonalities, manifest their fear of one another, and come to terms with their need for one another' (p.116).

The conditions for legitimate peripheral participation do not apply in that volunteers aspire only to be temporary members of the community, whereas their colleagues work in and depend on one institution for their livelihood. Volunteers are relatively external to the institutional struggle for hierarchical position, which leaves them less predictable, more free to question and to choose allegiances. Perhaps most importantly, these four volunteers arrived with limited ability to communicate with members of the community, and ignorance of the classifications governing social relations. This limited their access to the general discourse of the community and to the informal participation enjoyed by other novices, as noted in the first, second and fourth case studies. The importance of language in this regard is noted more generally by a VSO programme director:

> 'It is not absolutely essential that the volunteer is fluent in Indonesian. However, ability in the language is essential for social contacts… and there is a marked relationship between

volunteer satisfaction and enjoyment, and their ability in Indonesian' (placement summary, Alan, 20.10.95)

## Language learning in the context of classification

Knowledge of language is in itself a powerful classification (Graddol et al, 1993). To use the language proficiently gives a powerful sense of being a member of a community of practice, whereas lack of language excludes people from those groups. All volunteers in the case studies experienced the way the edge of the language community is also a limit for certain information. Language also marks the social limits of arguments; to put it another way, to be proficient in a language is to lose a good excuse for keeping out of community tensions.

To be a language learner is to be legitimately peripheral, a position which can be associated with more choice in some respects than a full participant. Phil (case study II) found his lack of fluent Indonesian to be a useful way of controlling his participation in the school, leaving him more able to concentrate on practical science. That he was nevertheless learning meant he did no damage to his reputation as a willing and committed colleague. Some of the same subtleties are evident in Anna's experience of language learning in Sumba. The evidence of her willingness to 'have a go' in Indonesian is attractive to speakers of the language:

> 'Monday, I treat the new group of patients waiting in outpatients to a rendition of how to eat healthily in Sumba, in my best possible Bahasa Indonesia. Normally enough locals are interested enough in the spectacle of a white woman spouting forth food talk at them in their language to make it a worthwhile experience' [S2:16].

Like many volunteers, Anna found that her initial lack of language inhibited her socially. She found a social solution:

> My initial lack of confidence with the language served to isolate me from contact with the community. Frustrated by the experience of not being able to express myself fully, feeling boring and stupid company for others and being laughed at, although not maliciously…Then I started language lessons and a couple of good friendships from which practice and confidence with the language grew [March 1998, S2:20-24].

In looking back on her experience after she had finished, language learning remained an important feature:

> Originally personal objectives were more oriented around my job building relationship with colleagues, *improving my language*, understanding nutritional habits. Obviously these are also part of establishing myself in the community too, and gradually as this happened personal objectives became less work focused, to discovering more of the beauty of Sumba, enjoy established friendships, use spare time for my own development… *Improving language skills remained a personal objective throughout.* (Anna, evaluation report, May 1998, S12:6].

Interestingly, Anna was one of the few volunteers in my data who had reflected openly on her experience of language learning in the community. Generally, learning Indonesian is understood as a relatively autonomous process, perhaps because of competition between volunteers that regularly

develops during the initial ten-week language course in Java. Unlike Anna, many volunteers tend not to talk about the problems involved, and to interpret correction as criticism. One of Phil's arguments had been 'with Ibu Lucia, she really started to get on my tits... correcting my language all the time, then eventually I got mad… [EL11:45].

### What are the processes through which accounts and distribution of resources change?

Having considered the case studies in relation to the *conditions* for learning represented by the classification of culture, and as legitimate peripheral participation in the context of classification, I now want to reflect on the learning *processes* involved, again in terms of the relationship between accounts and social resources. The case studies show that learning in the context of participation is not a comfortable, automatic, osmotic process, but one that involves contradiction, transgression and negotiation.

### 1. Learning through contradiction

Awareness of contradiction between different people's accounts, or between their accounts and the way time, material resources or information are distributed, is a powerful learning process. This is true for me as researcher as much as for placement participants. For instance, I interviewed Moira just three weeks after she had arrived from a rural part of Australia to be a volunteer English teacher in a Catholic boarding school in Flores. In response to a statement in the Q - sort pack: 'I found it quite hard to adapt to local way of life' (29) Moira told me:

> 'Well, I haven't had to change much, except in not being so independent. Yes a bit of difficulty, but not a lot' [EL6:176].

As I recorded at the time, I thought (but did not say), 'Haven't you? Getting up at 4.30am to go to church, eating every meal with a large group.... new place, town, food, language everywhere....all in three weeks!!' [EL6:176]. I was astounded at the contradiction between Moira's account of her response to change, and my assumption. Yet she didn't appear to be hiding anything, but to be telling me what she felt. Two months later in a letter she wrote about 'one big day of culture shock' where she had 'woken up' and realised some of the unreasonable expectations of her. Reflecting another year later she still felt that she had not experienced difficulty in adapting. This time she highlighted the help of colleagues in that process: 'The people are very tolerant and always answer my questions, they include me in everything' [EL22:7].

The ubiquity of contradiction is a result of the amount of classification of which the newcomer is unaware, and this is part of what makes the context of learning different from, for example, intercultural experience between European countries. Participants' accounts embody beliefs and expectations about resources, and through observation these beliefs can prove unfounded and expectations mistaken. My experience of contradiction listening to Moira's account was a powerful learning process for me, for I became aware of my assumptions about her, and about volunteers' experiences of the first few days in a new placement. Her later account of 'waking up' indicates a similar learning experience for her. Realisation or awareness of contradiction is often associated with expressions of surprise, astonishment, amazement or shock. In the case studies, David is

astounded at the use of cement sacks for wallpaper; Marcus at some of the differences between Alicia and Sarah; Alicia at the warmth of the local people towards her mother; the Brothers at David's ability to eat rice, at his curiosity to go and see the results of the riots, and his willingness to take a class 'when even only one student shows up'. Jan was shocked at the start of her placement, when she realised there was no shared agreement among NGOs as to what the placement was about. All these surprises come about through participation in the social setting, and with their strong sense of discovery and revelation, they form significant parts of subsequent accounts, through which they have an impact on further distribution of resources. For instance, David's new account of poverty in the local community, formed partly by that observation of cement sacks, motivated him to search for sources of money and other aid; whilst Jan's account of NGO confusion led her to resist involvement in their projects from the beginning of the placement.

Others' accounts can also reveal new insights into the distribution of resources. Ibu Elin described to Phil and myself the way the school had approached the decision to invite a second volunteer:

> 'Before you arrived, we had a meeting with Frater Marianus; he said that they wanted to ask for a VSO. And then he asked us all, what subject should we ask for? Everybody wanted to suggest, English.. they all wanted to have someone, English, so that they could get cassette players... for a language lab. Then we said, in Physics we really need a lot more help. Because in Physics, students... we don't have any help using the lab.. and then Frater said, OK if that's the case, lets ask for a Physics teacher, so that when they come, we can give them the opportunity to use the lab, because we want to make use of it. Ibu Lus and I asked for that… So that it was agreed…' [EL10:211-215].

The tone of Phil's response to this account: 'You mean that before I arrived, Frater already told Ibu...?' and 'These are things that I didn't know' expressed his astonishment at this news. He had assumed that the decision to invite him was made without consultation, and certainly without Ibu Elin's active involvement. Phil's account of the sexist, patriarchal hierarchy was called into question by Elin's account of this incident.

Jan arrived in her placement with a clear concept of and commitment to grassroots development, and quickly became aware that the conditions of NGOs in Lombok did not match up. This appeared ironic to Alicia, who believed that flexibility was the essential response to inevitable contradiction, and who had arrived in Indonesia in the same group as Jan and Graham:

> 'When Jan came moaning about her [placement], I had to stop myself going on about how good mine is. It's strange how [during language training] Jan and Graham were the two most dedicated to the idea [of development], most clear about what they were going to do...' [interview, Alicia, March 1998, M1:67].

As I wrote after the fourth case study, Jan's analysis of the situation led her to refuse compromises, which in turn led her to be positioned by some as an inflexible outsider, lacking in understanding of the particular context and culture. According to Jan's account, the local Lombok NGOs, with one or two exceptions, were concerned more about securing funding for survival than about meeting the needs of the people. Her interpretation is a local echo of Spivak's critique:

> 'The critique of the NGO is that in the New World Order of economic restructuring, whereby barriers between state economies and international capital are one-by-one removed, you need something which can take over the 'economic citizenship'… and this is

> done by the huge structure of collaborative NGOs. This is called the 'international civil society'…. In this context, NGOs are not a useful group to work with as they are too involved in the New World Order' (Spivak, 1997).

Jan's colleagues were also aware of contradictions in expectations: Pak Tadi recalled NGO hopes for simple, quick training on writing proposals, where Jan wanted to go 'from start to finish, until it became a concrete reality' [Lom3:17-18] (Pak Tadi). Another colleague said he had warned Jan that NGOs who joined the new network didn't know what it was for. There were existing networks and directories, and making another was 'unpopular', because the existing ones seemed to have had no benefit. '"You will be frustrated" I told her' [Lom6:17].

Sometimes contradictions between existing accounts and distributions of resources can only be recognised through further reflection. The Q-sort described in Chapter Four invited comparisons between the distribution of resources in a placement and elements of an account. Comparison of the Q sorts of a volunteer and colleague in the same placement reveals fascinating contradictions, some of which were highlighted in the discussion of the case studies. Volunteers too differed enormously in their Q sorts. The highest scoring volunteers on factors 2 to 7 are at least two and a half times more closely correlated with that factor than with any other factor (Appendix III, Table 2). In other words, the accounts that they construct of their placements using this set of statements are highly particular; there are very few statements on which they agree. However, these differences in perception can only play an active role in participants' learning once they become aware of them. The Q sort was particularly valued by volunteers and colleagues who used it as a common framework for reflection, became aware of some of the contradictions in their respective accounts of the placement, and began to learn from them.

Similarly, some participants apprehend contradictions more clearly through written accounts (diaries, letters and reports). Reflection in the context of difference does not happen automatically, but when it does, it can lead to significant re-evaluation of priorities.

## 2. Learning through transgression

A second way in which classification is revealed is through action that cuts across and reveals existing classification of social resources. A vocabulary to describe and analyse this process can be found in the work of Foucault, whose main project has been eloquently described (de Certeau, 1984) as 'delimiting a social stratum of practices that have no discourse and of founding a discourse on these practices' (p.46). Later on, Foucault paid more attention to the agency of the actor and the possibility of refusing the positioning offered by discourse. He developed the concept of transgression: the act of an individual testing, marking and perhaps expanding the limits of a discourse. Transgression coexists with boundaries and order, for the recognition of transgression is at once also knowledge of a boundary:

> '[T]he limit and transgression depend on each other for whatever density of being they possess: a limit could not exist if it were absolutely uncrossable and, reciprocally, transgression would be pointless if it merely crossed a limit composed of illusion and shadows… their relationship… is like a flash of lightning in the night which… gives a dense and black intensity to the night it denies… and yet owes to the dark the stark clarity of its manifestation' (Foucault 1977, pp.34-35).

Foucault and writers who followed him (e.g. Glick, 2000) have considered transgression mainly in relation to discourses of sexuality, in contexts where the boundaries of moral action are not the subject of open discourse. Through acts of transgression, what is 'normal' and taken-for-granted becomes 'remarkable' - in the sense of constituting a subject for remark or account. Garfinkel (1984) famously used transgression in experiments designed to make visible the norms of social interaction and the processes of their continual construction.

Transgression is not limited to deliberately experimental contexts. Describing a process of societal transformation, Freire (1974) explains how 'marked contradictions' (p.7) appear in a changing society, bringing about a point where people who have been 'submerged in reality… emerge. No longer *mere spectators*, they uncross their arms, renounce expectancy, and demand intervention' (ibid. p.13). Freire's educational programme can be read as one designed to facilitate transgression, but not one that necessarily leads to greater participation in the established institutions of society. In Brazil, the government's reaction was repressive, and Freire exiled (Carmen and Sobrado, 2000). Nonetheless, such transgressive action on the part of marginalised people is potentially identity-defining.

At one level, each volunteer placement constitutes transgression; the volunteer's arrival as a potential colleague is a refusal of a strong classification between North and South. The case studies describe how when individuals live in a community for two years, their participation develops, along with a common language. But this increasing participation sometimes requires an assertion of agency, an establishment of identity and sense of self against some feature of the existing distribution of social resources, perceived by others as transgression.

Not all transgression is so deliberate. In the context of unknown classification, the actions of newcomers will often cross boundaries that they do not perceive in advance. Intentional or not, the extent of the classification and the implications of the transgression are only known afterwards. It is this lack of foreknowledge of the consequences which makes transgression a peculiarly educational act. Transgression takes place in ignorance of the accounts that will be constructed or reconstructed to explain it.

In investigating the meaning and role of place in the social order, geographer Tim Cresswell (1996) chooses to look at 'behaviours that are judged as inappropriate in a particular location…' because in the act of transgression, 'the everyday, commonsense relationships between place and behaviour become obvious and underlined'. In a series of well-worked case studies, he shows how the common sense, taken-for-granted meaning of place (such as a military base, an ancient monument, the New York subway) is made visible through transgression of that place (by the Greenham Common women, new age travellers at Stonehenge, and graffiti artists). The act of transgression provokes and stimulates the dominant and taken-for-granted account of that place in terms of people's actions. In terms of learning, the transgression of women at Greenham Common made apparent the social relations, routines and networks that attached to the concept of the airbase, brilliantly revealing and questioning the taken-for-granted classification of military

authority and the way in which it is supported by the conservative 'family values' of the nation state.

In my case studies too, on a smaller scale, transgression brings taken-for-granted classification of place into accounts, such as the meaning of the homes of the two sets of Brothers, staffrooms and Alicia's accommodation. I noted in the case study how Alicia described using the windows of her new house to create an exhibition of herself. She told Phil and I that she was

> 'often watched, and how she responded sometimes by putting on a show, opening the windows so that twenty pairs of eyes could watch her cavorting around from the road' [M1:200].

Opening wide the shutters, Alicia turns what she considered to be the private interior of her house into a theatre. Space and darkness construct Alicia as the 'other', and she responds by temporarily embracing this position through her 'cavorting', and then rejecting it, by closing the windows. In other words, Alicia *plays* with being positioned as 'other', through her use of space and physical position in relation to others, for a few minutes.

This transgression revealed that she was an object of private study for local people. The boundaries of the private and the public can be revealed by transgression since they are often governed by unspoken rules and boundaries. Through her act, Alicia made public her knowledge of the private gaze of the people on the road, and confirmed her own sexuality, such that it became a subject for account. Through her account to Phil and I, she appealed to a shared norm and received assurance that we could relate to her action in our own experience.

In the second case study, John's move into a house away from the school featured in each participant's account. As transgression, it demanded explanation: 'John wanted to be able to come and go when he felt like it, not be so constrained' [EL9:105], said a young Brother who perhaps shared the sense of constraint. 'After 3-4 months he moved into a rented house at the other end of town. He had almost no relationship with many teachers, and not at all the same as Pak Phil. He was Protestant, or perhaps no faith' [EL9:10], said Marianus. For him, Catholic / Protestant is a pertinent explanation of the different behaviour of John and Phil. As transgression is explained, the taken-for-granted classifications relating to religious adherence are revealed.

The concept of transgression has been used to focus on the agency of children with disabilities in respect of their education (Allan, 1998), another situation in which there are barriers to open discourse. The way children with disability often refuse to use the material markers of disability, 'accidentally' dropping hearing aids in the pond or forgetting crutches, is seen as constituting powerful transgression. Another form of transgression observed by Allan (ibid.) involved play with stereotypes of disability, demanding to be pushed around the playground in a wheelchair. An important section of the book deals with the way in which those in authority, particularly teachers, fail to recognise and inadvertently cut across these actions taken by children on their own account. Transgression calls to account the beliefs of those who assume responsibility for acting on behalf of another person.

Transgression of the rules governing the distribution of material objects is evident in the case studies as well. When in the first case study, David's motorbike remains unused in the shed, and the Brothers collaborate in accounting for this, they jointly transgress against his positioning as a 'teacher upgrader' by VSO, because this accords with their need for an English teacher. The transgression is experienced when the VSO placement officer comes to town and powerfully reasserts the classification between regular teachers and volunteer, which would be embodied in the volunteer's use of a motorbike to visit other schools.

Material resources can be seen to circulate in regular flows in what Appadurai (1988 p.15) calls their 'commodity phase'; but they can also be the object of transgression, revealing the classification which gives them their value. 'In the mundane, day-to-day, small-scale exchanges of things in ordinary life… exchange has the routine and conventionalised look of all customary behavior… What is political about [this process] is the constant tension between the existing frameworks (of price, bargaining, and so forth) and the tendency of commodities to breach these frameworks… [because] not all parties share the same *interests* in any specific regime of value' (ibid. p.57). In the case studies, the contested meanings of materials as varied as bamboo, laboratory equipment and dictionaries are made clearer through transgression involving them. For example, according to existing local classification in Flores, bamboo is not a building material; the buildings which Alicia designs (case study III) are transgressive, highlighting this classification and stimulating new negotiations about the properties and social uses of bamboo. Similarly, reactions to the use of laboratory equipment in a school (case study II) reveal the extent to which its taken-for-granted value lies not in use but in possession.

Transgression by a full participant in the community can alter the significance of various classifications. Marcus's account of Alicia classifies her as technical expert in his technical, rational bamboo movement, uninvolved in management. But his transgressive kiss (case study III) reinforces his authority over existing classifications. By calling a meeting of workers that leads up to this transgression of gender norms, he repositions her as a management colleague, sets aside the classification by gender and reinforces the classification between management and workers.

At Dola Upper School (case study I), the brothers' initial account links David's position with the way his time is distributed. They see him as a native English speaking teacher, and as such it follows that he should spend most of his time teaching students at the school. Since he does this diligently, he becomes known as a hard working teacher. More classes are arranged for him to teach. The brothers' account is elaborated, linking David's willingness to take on more work with his readiness to go with them to a party and eat and drink what is prepared. David is now understood to be flexible and adaptable, and his own account of his role and position suggests shared agreement on this. However, David had feelings of frustration and loneliness which he found it impossible to express to his colleagues, until a day of crisis when he knew that 'we can't go on for two years like this, not communicating. It was impossible, and I thought, I'm going to ask'. Transgressions come about through a social process, as particular classifications become

significant to people. In David's case, one brother in particular was sensitive to the revelation of this classification of David, and responded by redistributing his time and access to information:

> 'In fact I often spend time with Pak David. We live together in this community, and if Pak David has any difficulty, he often asks me. And also from me, sometimes I suggest things that he might help with… perhaps Pak David has a need of some kain, then we go together to the villages and I help him look for it… we wanted to put together a proposal, to ask for funding form the embassies… we co-operated on that as well' [Yanuarius, EL2: 10]

Forming an account of his transgression during my visit several months later helped David to explain the power of the classification which positioned him. His 'realisation' of the way in which he added to the status of the school was critical in reconceptualising his role in the school.

There is a strong link between humour and transgression. Both David and Phil were the subject of jokes by the Brothers, eventually to Phil's frustration (case study II). Most placement descriptions stress the importance of a sense of humour; e.g. 'Life moves at a slower pace in Flores than in the West. Government institutions such as hospitals are notorious for delays and convoluted bureaucracy. The volunteer will need to have lots of patience and a sense of humour to cope with the inevitable frustrations' [EL7: 28]. Transgression is often humorous in character: it is possible to find humour in Alicia's dancing in the open window and in David's motorbike stuck in the shed. Yet although humour and transgression overlap, one difference between them lies in the audience. For example, Phil photocopied a page of his personal diary for me which comprised a sketch of 'Flores man': a private, satirical drawing, the product of his frustration and easily read as racist. Transgressive practices are precarious in nature, requiring the constant definition and policing of boundaries.

Transgression is almost inevitable in the placement, but it can be accounted for in a variety of ways that have different effects, reinforcing either the order of the placement or the challenge to that order. For example, transgressive acts can be accounted for as mistakes. 'One way of dealing with a breach of protocol by a cultural stranger is to attribute the conduct to ignorance rather than malice' (Young 1996 p.38). As a mistake, transgression becomes a legitimate act of participation by a newcomer in a community of practice. To be legitimately peripheral is to have one's transgressions excused.

It is no coincidence that successful volunteer placements are associated with communities of practice, the boundaries of which are necessarily negotiable. Such communities must have routes whereby outsiders can learn and become insiders, if the community is to continue into the future. Communities of practice are strongly classified environments, but these classifications become known to the learner as he or she becomes aware of contradictions, transgressing and negotiating as an increasingly full participant.

Unlike contradiction, transgression is visible to many people, who may interpret it in a variety of ways. De Certeau's (1984) analogy of a bridge is very useful in conveying this point:

> 'The bridge is ambiguous everywhere: it alternately welds together and opposes insularities. It distinguishes them and threatens them. It liberates from enclosure and destroys autonomy…. As a transgression of the limit, a disobedience of the law of place, it represents a departure, an attack on a state, the ambition of a conquering power, or the

> flight of an exile. In any case, the betrayal of an order. But at the same time,… it allows or causes the re-emergence behind the frontiers of the alien element that was controlled in the interior, and gives objectivity (that is, expression and re-presentation) to the alterity that was hidden inside the limits…' (p.128).

Transgression can call out more transgression. In the second case study, Phil's demand on behalf of women teachers is interpreted by the Brothers as an attack on their authority. His transgression plays a part in Elin's shift to a transgressive position with respect to this patriarchal hierarchy on her own account, and strengthens their relationship. Marcus's refusal to fit in with the timetable of the volunteer agency (case study III) was educational for Alicia, and later for the programme officer, Roger: 'I understood, and we shared a laugh about it, and later I explained to Roger… he understood, but it's about the mentality of the large organisation thinking it can demand attention, that it is helping, that others must just be waiting for them to turn up...' [Alicia, M1:82]. In the last case study, Jan repeatedly enacted transgression in the placement, refusing to take the positions prepared for and expected of her. She was public about her appraisal of institutions and people, forcing her boss to respond, since he is leading a development NGO. Among the many consequences were allegiances with others who occupied a marginal place in relation to the main accounts, as well as stronger classification of information, etc. The flow of information became even more restrained between her and main colleagues.

In the context of unknown and partially perceived classification, transgression is a powerful process of change. By bringing taken-for-granted classification into accounts, transgression widens the context of negotiation in and between communities of practice. Transgression can develop the negotiation context for powerfully supported classification. Both Frater Yanuarius's and David's accounts present the process of their placement as a negotiation of social resources; their accounts become more and more summative, representing the distribution of social resources and forming explanations for the discrepant and the dilemmatic.

### 3. Learning through negotiation

New classifications can be elaborated into accounts, and accounts transformed into new distributions of resources, through a process of negotiation; in the process, negotiators learn the value that each other sets on resources of different kinds. Negotiation is possible when people are able to construct meaningful accounts with each other; a partially shared framework is a prerequisite, and we have seen how participation and transgression can lead to the construction of this framework. Strauss (1978) saw how identities and activities in a hospital ward were constructed through interaction. He makes visible an unseen process of legitimate peripheral participation, with patients as newcomers to the community of practice:

> 'This web of cumulative interactions - some consisting of explicit negotiation... is a vital aspect of the proferring, assigning, adapting to, adopting, accepting, honoring, and asserting - and no doubt also denying and rejecting - of important identities and activities by patients and staff alike. In that sense the entire tangle of negotiations and other interactions helps to maintain, and certainly does not unduly disturb, the limits to behaviour that are essentially imposed by the more powerful of the two parties... insofar as negotiation occurs within the limits of those rules, basically it would appear to be in the

> nature of trade-offs pertaining both to the work... and to agreements on what each regards as his or her appropriate identity... ' (Strauss 1978, p.232).

For Strauss (1978), negotiation is a dynamic social structure that can 'affect how actors see social order and what they believe is, for themselves and for others, possible or impossible, problematic or probable' (ibid. p.11).

> '… rather than seeing a relatively inflexible structure with a limited and determinable list of structural properties, we have to conceive of a ward, hospital or any other institution as a structure in process... [with] a potential range of properties far greater than the outsider (the researcher) can possibly imagine unless watching the insiders at work... staff, family, or patients can call on diverse properties that he never dreamed existed but that became temporarily or more permanently part of the structural processes of the ward' (Strauss, 1978 p.258)

Strauss elaborates the notion of ‘structural process’ in describing the nature of limits to negotiation:

> 'what someone takes as limits to negotiation - in any given situation - may not really constitute limits. Given more resources of any kind... time, money, skill, information, 'awareness', boldness or perhaps desparation... what were previously taken as probably nonnegotiable may in fact be negotiable in some... degree ' (ibid. p.259)

Negotiation is common in the first three case study placements. Much of the process of the placement could be seen as the progressive (or sometimes regressive) structuring of social resources through repeated negotiation. Moreover, different types of negotiation go on simultaneously: negotiation between boss and volunteer is different in kind to that between colleague and volunteer, and to that between colleague and boss. As placements progress, a 'negotiated order' develops which constructs some classifications as highly significant. Through the negotiation that was necessary to collaborate in science teaching, Phil and Elin constructed a shared concept of 'good practical work in science' which became part of their social order and expanded the limits of their joint action, leading them to work together outside SMUK Aru. Their negotiation begins within the community of practice over particular roles and so on, but through negotiation they develop a shared value framework with respect to science activities and their own roles, a broader orientation which is potentially disruptive within the institution. Subsequent limits on negotiations are discovered through transgression; Phil discovers through discussion that Elin’s role in teacher training is off limits.

Accommodation is a common subject of negotiation; in the process, classifications of private / public are brought into accounts. Accommodation appears to be one of the first things that motivates volunteers in the data to start negotiating, often initially by transgressing. A new volunteer in Java told me:

> 'As a Westerner, I had to push quite hard over changing my accommodation… it would have taken for ever if I hadn't said "I'm going there tomorrow"… I could tell it wasn't the way but I couldn't wait, and have actually had better responses and more positive interaction since. Seem to be regarded as an equal by all levels of staff!' [bandung2:39].

Negotiations of social resources are not only important as individual interactions. Rather, the nature, intensity, duration and pattern of negotiation comprises the social order of the placement.

Freire writes of "a view of human agency in which the production of meaning takes place in the dialogue and interaction that mutually constitute the dialectical relationship between human subjectiveness and the objective world" (cited in Giroux 1987, p.11).

David's prolonged negotiation with his headteacher over his teaching hours describes the construction of a negotiated social order, particularly when compared with Phil's account of almost disinterested leadership. 'Proferring, assigning, adapting to, adopting, accepting, honoring, and asserting': the string of verbs that Strauss (1978) saw enacted in hospital interactions describe a process of learning very like that which David described, regarding the time he spent teaching English:

> 'Now I go in and teach from twenty past ten till one o'clock. He's happy with that. He's not in any way overbearing…. whilst technically I could refuse that, in practice he's very amenable to requests that I might make, and it's a matter of give and take' [EL30: 157]

Strauss' (1978) notion of structural process is a sensitising reminder that Dola, Aru, YPBF and the Lombok NGOs were dynamic institutions before the placements began, and remained so after the placements had finished. In this perspective, the social worlds of Chapter Two represent complexes of practice formed through negotiation. The placement represents a negotiated order before the volunteer arrives, and the volunteer's negotiating behaviour is often disruptive of that negotiated order. The prevailing order influences who can talk to who, and which other boundaries (ie. of adat, culture, institution, family, moral responsibility) are significant. But the negotiating possibilities for the volunteer are often wider:

> 'I've regularly discerned that, as there would be in schools in England, there are certain politics, you don't tread on this person's toes... Where you've got an outsider coming in… you're right, that does seem to be something that can cut through reluctance and past experience. I must say I've generally found teachers very willing to come and take part' [David, EL30:56].

Accounts of negotiation are powerful in establishing identity and hope. The postscript to case study I shows how David summarises changes in his placement, alluding to the negotiation over information ('original aims of VSO'), material resources ('needs of the local community'), time ('shift in my daily routine'), social position ('teachers working together, elementary network'), and with plans for the creation of space ('a language centre of some kind'). The letter from Frater Yanuarius substantiates this record and records his hope as well.

Negotiation is not always accounted for so openly. During one of our interviews, Alicia (case study III) described how the lack of clear initial aims left a space for negotiation: 'they knew they needed something, and we were able to *work it out'* [M1: 155] (*my emphasis)*. By contrast, in her detailed preliminary report to the volunteer agency, Alicia does not mention negotiation, constructing a version of herself as completely autonomous: 'After my arrival in country I realised that the main issue was going to be changing people's perceptions of using bamboo as a building material… That's why I spent time investigating the house typologies' [M1:21].

This last account supports a classification whereby the volunteer is the only active agent in the placement, whilst the former indicates that negotiation is a common and widespread mode of learning.

Another way of perceiving the significant product of learning is as the partial sharing of frameworks of evaluation. We have seen in case studies how the values of many Indonesian colleagues are rooted in the stable, patriarchal family, supporting classification according to age and gender. For some volunteers, development acts as an framework against which they judge people, their use of time, information and material. Whatever the evaluative frameworks held by individuals, the processes of contradiction, transgression and negotiation can establish some overlap between those frameworks.

## The link between contradiction, transgression and negotiation

I have used the case studies to develop a framework of learning which encompasses the key events and developments which occured in those placements. The three processes (awareness of contradiction, transgression and negotiation) are seen to take place in contexts where classification is initially unknown to the volunteer, and either unknown or acknowledged, hidden or taken-for granted by colleagues. These are contexts where participants' accounts, including their expectations of each other, are shaped by their widely differing experience of professional and social practice, and of political and economic structures.

The table below summarises some of examples of these learning processes in the four case study placements:

**Table 4: Examples of learning processes in case study placements**

| | **contradiction** | **transgression** | **negotiation** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Dola High School** | David: e.g. role as native speaker vs. expectations of wider involvement; organisation of the school trip vs. assumptions about limitations; the strangeness of Flores vs. assumed similarity with UK<br>Colleagues: e.g. David's ability to eat rice vs. assumptions about Westerners; his work vs. assumptions about age. | David: e.g. social isolation and loneliness; positioning as a teacher upgrader by the agency; links and collaboration with competitor school<br>Colleagues: positioning of David as a teacher upgrader by the agency, both in school and outside | e.g. David's role; his timetable, position, use of resources.<br>Other teachers' time,use of materials, communication of information, commitment to changing practice |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Aru High School** | Phil: eg: position of women in Indonesia vs. UK; nature of the hierarchy in the placement; the attitude of the head to Phil on different occasions<br>colleagues: Phil's Indonesian language vs. role as science teacher | Phil: eg: the position of women; privacy and autonomy; choice of where to eat;<br>Elin: positioning as a female science teacher | e.g. Phil's accommodation; practical work in science; use of the laboratory; scientific knowledge; the duration of the placement; cultural norms; white teacher as status symbol in other schools |
| **Bamboo project** | Alicia: technical abilities of staff vs. expectations; attitude to mother vs. expectations; attitude of other volunteers to locality vs. her experience<br>Colleagues: Sarah's 'Western' boldness vs. Alicia's 'Indonesian' fear; | Alicia: lack of privacy; work outside the institution<br>Marcus: expectations of the volunteer agency; sexism of the workers | role of bamboo; house design; Alicia's position non-managerial position; Alicia's timetable; knowledge about bamboo as a building material; attitude to animal sacrifice |
| **Lombok NGO** | Jan: The NGO world in Lombok vs. notion of grassroots development; collaborative task vs. competitive NGO economy<br>Colleagues: Jan's 'dogmatism' vs. expected flexibility | Jan: with several NGO managers over her positioning as a general aide for their particular NGO.<br>Pak Yuri: standing up for Jan against the others in the NGO forum | With those on the margins, developing an alternative vision for NGO work in Lombok; maintenance of a role for Jan on the margins of many NGOs, despite difficulties |

Through awareness of contradiction, participants revise their expectations, constructing new accounts of the distribution of social resources, particularly of the positioning of self and others in relation to significant classifications. They thus construct accounts of their differences and similarities with various other participants. Participants do not necessarily become aware of contradiction quickly, if at all, for it is often more comfortable to avoid testing out the relationship between accounts and the way material resources, information, time etc. are actually distributed. The opportunity for stepping back and reflecting can stimulate awareness of contradiction. But the new accounts which result from awareness can be very powerful, guiding participants in realising their personal commitments. If shared with other participants, awareness of contradiction can lead to accounts of shared agreement.

Through their acts of transgression, participants learn about the social structures which support the classifications giving rise to the experience of contradiction. They may learn who gains from the status quo, and who from change; they may learn the significance of various artefacts, spaces, information and personal position in terms of influencing the course of events. Through another's transgression, a potentially large group of participants may learn about the significance of particular classifications. They may learn or relearn the meaning that is attached to various social resources. Perhaps most importantly, they may learn about that individual's experience of contradiction, and thus see the individual in question as a person, rather than a subject or an 'other'.

Acts of transgression potentially enlarge or reduce the limits of negotiation between particular participants by making them aware of each other as actors with common or diverging interests in relation to change or the status quo. They may develop accounts which embody the possibility of mutual support and social action, or which reduce such possibilities.

Through their negotiations, participants learn about their mutual positioning as actors rather than subjects. At they redistribute these resources through negotiation, they learn about the meanings and relative value that they and others attach to various times, places and materials They may learn about the classifications which structure those meanings and represent limits to negotiation: for example, their own positioning as foreigner; the taboo use of a particular artefact or place, or the special value of some kinds of information.

### Outcomes of the placement in terms of the alternative learning framework

This learning framework focuses attention on the processes of the volunteer placement. But it also links in many ways to issues at the heart of development discourse, like equity, through the focus on the distribution of resources; and to participants' biographies and interpretations, through the focus on accounts.

As we saw in Chapter Four, particular distributions of social resources are associated with various definitions of poverty, and the alleviation of poverty requires the redistribution of social resources. Various paradigms of development place emphasis on the classification of different social resources. For example, Chamber's school of rural development focuses on the positioning of people in poverty as owners of information and knowledge, and on overcoming the classification which insulates their knowledge as actors from that of development agencies and others with control of resources. Political development solutions regard the access of the poor to land and other spatial and material resources to be crucial, and address the classifications supported by governments or international business that maintain inequitable distributions of land. In these volunteer placements, we see volunteers and their colleagues placing different emphasis on various social resources, and sometimes learning to change that emphasis. The placement in an institution of a single outsider gives a particular flexibility to change the emphasis, because an individual can learn about existing classifications and be repositioned in relation to them.

Participants' accounts represent another and perhaps an equally important outcome of volunteer placements. Accounts represent memories and evidence of learning, and it is clear from the accounts of volunteers and their colleagues that they perform an important biographical task. The accounts which individuals construct 'make sense' of their learning experiences in relation to other discourses and to their own sense of self; they represent the continual work of actors to construct their identity. As such, they greatly influence the future actions of the actor.

In considering the outcomes of the volunteer placement after it has finished, we may need to look in these two areas. How have social resources been redistributed as a result of the placement, and does that new distribution prove sustainable? Equally importantly, what is the nature of

participants' accounts of their experience, and how do these accounts change after the placement is finished and the volunteer has gone home?

The framework of learning presented here has been developed largely with reference to the four placements which were the subject of case study in Chapter Five. I now want to test out and develop this framework in a range of other placements; to consider the outcomes of volunteer placements in the terms outlined here, and in the final chapter with particular reference to paradigms of development which are central to the social world of volunteering.

# Chapter Seven: Learning in a Classified Context of Difference

In the previous chapter, the case studies were used to develop a framework of learning in a context of classification and community. In the first part of this chapter, six further placements are compared and contrasted over the course of their first year, in order to consider the relationship between the development of these placements and participants' awareness of contradiction and trangression. We note which of these processes of learning occur, and consider the evidence for some of their immediate social effects, particularly in terms of accounts and distributions of social resources.

These placements then are revisited, focusing on how these accounts and distributions develop as the placements approach a conclusion. Particular attention is paid to the construction of projects, separate from the main institution. The development of solidarity between colleagues and volunteer is also explored. Not all changes in the placement are the result of participants' learning, but it becomes clear that learning contributes to the effect of many other changes. For example, changes in context can present new opportunities for negotiation; the effect of pressure on resources through external changes depends partly on the existing negotiation context. The transgression of other volunteers brings fresh awareness of contradiction, as does the approaching end of the placement, which liberates some participants' accounts.

Finally, the end of the placement is considered in terms of learning processes. Key outcomes of placements when they have finished are identified in terms of both accounts and distributions of social resources, which are seen to change through the effect of further interactions beyond the placement. The possibility of resisting assimilation of the experience of volunteering into development discourse is explored.

## Effects of learning in the first stage of volunteer placements

I begin this chapter by comparing and contrasting the earlier part, in most cases the first year, of several placements on the islands of Sumba and Flores in relation to these processes. Generally, as in the case study placements, it is in this early stage that awareness of contradiction and transgression featured as processes of learning. In both of the first two placements considered here, colleagues and volunteers are aware of contradictions between their accounts and expectations and the distribution of resources; yet it is only in the first that these contradictions become a subject of discussion, with consequences in the event of the volunteer's transgression. By contrast, the distance between volunteer and colleagues in the second placement grows, and communication becomes increasingly difficult; the classification between them strengthens as the year goes by.

The first placement[10] was in SMUK Baik Hati, a Catholic high school, and it began in 1992. The volunteer's job title, like David's (case study I), was English teacher / upgrader. Rob identifed himself firstly as a teacher, and his awareness of contradiction developed in the context of participation:

[10] This placement is the subject of the case study in Appendix II.

> 'The only way of knowing what's going on in the classroom is by teaching yourself. You can't watch it and find out… that was important - for my self confidence. I don't think you should be allowed to do that job without teaching' [S14:12]. 'As a normal member of staff I obviously feel an active part of the whole, and see an unwritten part of my job is to do what I can with regards to the daily life of the teachers and the running of the school' [placement report, July 1993, S13:13].

Very much as at Dola (case study I), the school hierarchy had interpreted the placement as the offer of a native speaking English teacher; '…it transpired that the headteacher considered I was hired on the basis of being an extra pair of hands... This has made my attempts at working alongside the other English teachers seem inappropriate and largely unwelcome given my perceived status' (RB, volunteer report). For some teachers at the school, there was a contradiction between his role as 'just a teacher' and his obvious expertise in English language teaching as a Westerner who 'stood out much more' [Ibu Ira, March 1998, S8:20]. Rob realised that the teacher designated by the school as his main colleague '...wasn't really interested at all... he changed what he was doing as he saw me walking past' [S14:51-52].

Unlike SMUK Dola, 'the school was a real state, at the time when I was there. The head was very ill, old, and about to go in the next month, except he never quite did...' [Rob, S14:26-27]. Rob described at the time how

> 'Working in the school as an ordinary teacher is … extremely frustrating at the moment… the staff and students have become demotivated… reflected through 'difficult' student behaviour. But as no doubt is the case in all Indonesian institutions the staff are given no personal responsibility and hence have no power. To me this constitutes a very difficult working situation' [Rob, placement report, July 1993, S13:13].

Other relative outsiders at Baik Hati were experiencing similar contradictions. Ira recalled how 'everyone was bringing everyone else down' [S8:20 ]. Eli and Ira were science teachers at the school, on the margins of the community. Ira was born on Sumba but her parents were Chinese; she says of herself at that time that she was 'keen to get on, to learn, to develop' [S8:12]. They had quickly identified Rob as somebody who had come to

> '… help teachers to get on, help to improve standards. There was a feeling that we were going in the same direction. Rob (and VSO) thought that the main purpose of the placement was targeted at teachers, their methods and their own English ability' [Ibu Ira, S8:14].

Pak Agus befriended Rob. He was a teacher of Indonesian who had come from an isolated district in West Sumba, and trained at the relatively radical Sanata Dharma University in Yogyakarta in Java. Eli, to whom Rob was married in 1995, told me 'He's got completely different ideas. And he is the person who wouldn't want to be bent [corrupt]' [Eli, Feb 1999, S14 :120]. To Rob,

> '… he was friendly, slightly older than me, interested in the same sort of things that I was interested in, and we became quite close… He was deputy head for a while, and then lost favour. He would have been a really good head, had he been given the opportunity. And in fact he's now gone to be a head. But I'd be interested to see how disillusioned he was' [S14:37]

These three teachers, also relatively marginalized in the school, shared with Rob an awareness of the contradictions of their situation, the classification between the school management and the teachers, and aligned themselves together. Rob explains what brought them together:

> 'Politics.....! (laugh) Reading Kompas [Indonesia's main national newspaper]... I was absolutely desperate for information initially. And Agus had Kompas. And of course I couldn't understand Kompas initially, so we started talking and he said well don't worry 'cause about 90% of the Indonesian population can't read Kompas either… Agus was an outsider from the yayasan (school organisation) because he was a trouble maker, he had good ideas. And he was young, and he was outspoken. These were people who were interested in talking about wider things of teaching. And also a lot of them devoted a lot of time to me, staff room time, talking about Sumbanese culture' [S14:39]

'Talking about the wider things of teaching …', the group discussed the contradictions that they perceived between their aspirations for education and the local situation in the school. Rob was unsure what action he should take: 'I lack the certainty that I ought to tackle these issues despite their obviously detrimental impact on my colleagues and my work' (Rob, placement report, July 1993, S13:9]. Rob had already marked this uncertainty about the appropriate level of his involvement by refusing to wear the uniform of the government teacher, in a way he later found embarrassing but which was clearly important to him at the time:

> '*Rob*: In my silly little ways I wouldn't get a uniform, but I did buy a shirt'. *Eli*: It would have been fantastic if you had a uniform. *Rob*: It was pathetic (of me). I did buy a blue shirt, what was as close as possible, and got one of those little pins, which I then later found out I wasn't allowed to wear… I didn't salute the flag' [S14:277]

The volunteer had transgressed in another way, refusing to raise the exam marks of his students. The response of the management had the effect of pushing him back towards the margins of the school:

> 'Monday to Thurs I teach all 15 classes some of their English syllabus. This is a fundamental change in my school base job as I used to have whole class responsibility. The latter was removed when it became apparent that the grades I gave were not compatable with the wishes of the school. In some ways this gives me more freedom, but maybe less credibility with other staff as I no longer have the same responsibilities as they do' [Rob, placement report, RB, July 1993, S13:5]

The management's attitude was confirmed by a headteacher on the island of Alor, who happened to mention to me that Baik Hati 'seemed to be suspicious of volunteers' [EF4:18].

In this placement, the common awareness of contradiction shared by a group of colleagues and the volunteer was the starting point for discussion of a classification which significantly affected the institution: the insulation between management, teachers and students in terms of information and social positioning. The volunteer's marginalisation by the school management after transgression of this classification contributed to mutual trust in that group; they positioned themselves together as critical outsiders, and constructed a shared account of the problems in the school which became a basis for negotiation of future roles.

The learning that this process represents is highlighted in the contrast with a placement in East Sumba, at SMUK Augustine. During the first year of her placement as a science teacher, the volunteer never deliberately transgressed, despite experiencing ongong contradictions between her

expectations and the situation she found herself in. Indeed, she tried ‘to keep out of what’s really going wrong in the school’ [Joanne, S11:159], whilst worrying that she had very little communication with colleagues or headteacher, who ‘just laughed at me when I enquired about where I might get some chairs and tables for the lab’ [letter to programme office, Sept 1995, S11:5]. The volunteer reserved her grievances for me as researcher, and to her field officer within the volunteer organisation:

> 'Sometimes if there are misunderstandings… they blame my language and it's not my language at all. Especially when I first got there… it used to really piss me off…' [S11:157-159].

But Joanne did not explain her frustration to any of her colleagues. I asked Pak Roberto, the science teacher who had been at the school during the first year of the placement, about the early difficulties. Firstly he told me it was 'the culture… culture shock…', then he became more precise. It was to do with being alone with a white woman:

> 'One of the difficulties was the need to keep a safe distance from a woman volunteer, so as to look after the feelings of everyone concerned. Difficult, when that couldn't be explained to Joanne; she just saw reluctance to enter the lab on Roberto's part; each of us got more and more tense' [Roberto, S3: 25-26].

Roberto said that there had been an 'internal problem' in the school as well [S3:12], but Joanne was unaware of this, feeling that she was somehow to blame. Other events contributed to her growing awareness of a contradiction between her job description and her positioning by other staff. But she did not transgress against the prevailing norms:

> 'I discipline the kids… but sometimes people will walk up and take over, and make kids do things that I disagree with like walk around on their knees, and things… I've never said to a teacher… "this is my problem and you keep of it", I just let them get on with it. So I suppose in those ways, I've been made to feel, vaguely useless…' [Joanne, S11:161-163].

There was further contradiction with her position as teacher in that no-one commented when she withdrew from school routines, such as the signing-in book: ‘…I didn't fill it in for months, but they never came to me and said.... "Joanne, you should be signing this book", whereas anybody else would be told off and it was a bit like, I don't really count… it wouldn't be nice to be in a school in Britain and be like that, you'd want to be part of everything. Whereas you get used to not being...’ (interview, JD, June 1997). Two years into her placement, Joanne still felt the contradictions of her peripheral position in the school: '… when you're first there and you're not really doing much… it would have been nice for somebody to show a bit of interest. So much of it is just, am I doing this for me?… If I get stressed out, I think, "if I didn't do it, who would be bothered?" [S11:176].

After six months Joanne planned a visit to another science teaching volunteer placement in Sulawesi, hoping that direct comparison would help her to reflect on her placement:

> 'I need to see someone else's situation which brings me onto things here… I still worry that things are not how they should be… I still have guilt pangs that I should be doing more and that they are all unhappy with me… I have discussed the situation with Frater and he remains supportive, though I doubt if he would tell me otherwise. So this is why it will be good to see Paul's situation so I can make a more rational judgement about things here and

> shortly afterwards discuss things with you' [Letter to programme office, Feb 1996, S11:20].

Joanne was able to see her own role more clearly through her visit to Sulawesi. On her return, she began to work outside the main institution, just as Rob would:

> Time spent chatting with the teachers that Paul has worked with was useful as I was able to ascertain their expectations of a VSO volunteer... Since returning from Sulawesi, I've put the wheels in motion to start running SMP (middle school) teacher workshops on a similar basis to Paul's. The visit has therefore had an immediate effect… in terms of me starting to visit the SMP schools through the Catholic schools organisation' [Report to programme office, April 1996, S11:13].

In both these placements, colleagues and volunteers are aware of contradictions between their accounts and expectations and the distribution of resources. But these contradictions are not discussed at Augustine; classification between volunteer and colleagues on the basis of gender and ethnicity is strengthened, the volunteer feels increasingly isolated, and colleagues are increasingly mystified. The laboratory became a place of refuge for the volunteer, and a no-go area for her colleagues; the volunteer loses her sense of purpose. In contrast, when Rob's transgression results in his marginalisation, this is strong evidence to colleagues of the volunteer's positioning on their side with respect to the classification, upon which the volunteer and some colleagues construct a shared account of their mutual trustworthiness and integrity, and perhaps joint action in future. Such a shared account is associated with sharing time and space (in this case, breaktimes in the staffroom).

### Unintentional transgression

Unintentional transgression can have a similar effect in deepening relationships between some colleagues and the volunteer, whilst widening the gulf between others. At the hospital in nearby Waikabubak, the volunteer nutritionist (called Anna) became more aware of contradiction over her first year. She was committed to widening access to good health care: 'I want to highlight the impact of traditional beliefs and customs, the poor economic power, low levels of education on nutritional practices in this community… How expectations/ aims need to be appropriate to actual situations' [S2:66]. Initially, no one gave Anna any information, and it was natural to accept everything she observed at face value. The head gave her a task through which she learnt how she and others were positioned on the periphery of the organisation. In carrying out the task conscientiously, Anna unintentionally transgressed against hospital norms, and as at Baik Hati the social effect was important:

> When I first got here, the director asked me to prepare a menu cycle for a more balanced diet etc. I did all that, put a lot of work into it… It was within the budget. In the hospital, the budget for food was about Rp 30 million [about £5000 at that time] whereas only about Rp10 million was used for food… But asking about that, doors just closed. He said take it to the accountant: who told me there was no money left for this year, perhaps next. Various people said things that helped me to understand I would never get the money. Comments like 'that's in the West, things aren't like that here'. The nutritionist especially seemed to find it funny. A dentist who was here, she was more sympathetic, "it's frustrating, isn't it?" '[S2: 167-169].

The dentist became Anna's confidant in the hospital: 'I return to my office and maybe indulge in a doughnut with the dentist and her nurse. More gossip of course' [S2:14]. As for the nutritionist, he had already felt the power of the hospital management. He too was an outsider to Sumba:

> 'I didn't understand why he seemed so apathetic, didn't want to join me coming to see patients etc. He's from Sulawesi: not many of the staff get on with him. But one day he confided in me that the director had written a letter of incompetence about him. So then that began to fit into place; of course he didn't want to get involved, to do anything that would make him stand out after that' [S2: 102].

'Working out the relationships between people and why things are as they are took a year' [S2:94]. She gradually found that others did not share her aspirations:

> 'The head of the hospital is the only doctor; he's useless as a head, no better as a doctor. One small illustration: bawling out a nurse on Sunday afternoon for disturbing him, when he was on call, to come and see a mother and child in trouble at labour. He didn't go, they died; they may have done anyway, but he wasn't interested. 'He's making enough money not to be bothered' [S2:80].

Later, Anna gave an account of the classifications within the hospital. Whilst failing to break them down, as an outsider she herself remained unconstrained by them:

> '… a hierarchical system operates. There is a lot of bitching between departments rather than departments working together for the good / 'development' of the hospital. The director hardly talks to anyone apart from the heads of department and senior office staff.' [S2:214] 'Initially I tried to minimise differences until I woke up to how impossible this is, and the benefits of being an "outsider" ' [S2:272]. 'I tried to work in all departments, the women's and men's, the maternity unit, etc.'

People trust Anna not to behave like they do… partly because she is an outsider…[S2: 112]. She revised her expectations of involvement; her first year ended with her looking for other ways in which she could be involved in health promotion through nutrition:

> '… before I thought I could be involved in changing the financial system, getting the budget for nutrition properly used.. Now I go in and say, "This patient should be fed milk" etc; I know they won't have milk, but at least I've told the nurses what should be happening' [S2:108]. It was good to talk with some teams of doctors from Den Pasar [Bali] who had a similarly apathetic reception to their training at the hospital…' [S2:111].

This placement shows how unintentional transgression can be sufficient to reveal a volunteer's intentions and provoke reactions in colleagues. In taking for granted the integrity of institutional leadership and carrying out the task given to her, the volunteer evoked sympathy from similarly mistreated colleagues who became allies and friends. Volunteer and colleagues learnt more about each others' positioning with respect to the leadership, and more about their respective commitment to health promotion; this was a basis from which to develop new activities outside the institution.

## Other effects of transgression

The three placements considered so far show how the transgression of a volunteer as a lone individual in respect of the taken-for-granted classification of hierarchy within the community creates a context for a working relationship with the outsiders already in the community. The absence of transgression or communication about perceived contradictions leaves the volunteer

progressively more isolated, strengthening the classification between them by reducing the sharing of information, space, time or material resources. The individual volunteer who transgresses in relation to a local classification, in these cases between management and workers, performs an action which is salient for other individuals subject to that same classification. Through the reaction of various others to their transgression, the volunteer learns how those others are positioned, how they perceive various contradictions and classifications, and about their commitments.

The social reaction to transgression can vary, and produce very different social effects. This becomes evident through consideration of another placement, in the hospital in Ende, Flores. The volunteer laboratory technician there, Graham, was known to other volunteers including Alicia (case study III) to be committed to the notion of development before the start of his placement [M1:53]. He worked for a hospital director who was from Flores but very orientated to the West; 'he watches a lot of CNN, loves to pick up new catch-phrases' [EL7:84]. The director had grand plans for the hospital:

> 'The idea was that the status of the hospital needs to be raised from 'D' to 'C', and the lab is part of that, and the number of tests and machines. This is a government institution and it's very egotistical. Thinks of itself and the way its going to survive. It doesn't really relate to the health of the local people' [Graham, EL7:273-278]

The principal change needed in the lab was the capacity to carry out bacteriological tests, which required much more stringent hygiene conditions. Graham quickly became graphically aware of the contradictions between people's accounts and the distribution of resources. Soon after he arrived, the director asked him to write a report on what he saw needed doing in the lab. Some of his recommendations were implemented immediately, such the practice of separating blades and needles from other waste; but Graham noticed that everything was still collected together, packed into wooden boxes and taken to an open incineration site… 'The dogs know how to get the lids of the boxes off, and the sharps of course are left lying on the ground' [EL7:108-114]. In summary, 'everything gets done pretty efficiently, with next to no attention paid to hygiene - as with the rest of the hospital (or even the rest of Indonesia for that matter)' [EL13:31].

As with Anna's experience of writing a report for the boss, there were potential allies among the other staff: Javanese doctors seconded to the hospital who appeared similarly frustrated. But as a different ethnic group, and only posted to Flores for several years themselves, the accounts they had formed through their own experience of contradiction served only to heighten the volunteer's awareness of the cultural classification: 'Dr Bambang has now returned to Jawa after his years of secondment here. Much to his relief, I know. Cos he found it, the Javanese find it hard here. They see it as kind of a purgatory, rather than as a... so they find it just as hard, as a general rule, trying to develop things, as I do… So I'm not alone in this. I'm not the Westerner trying to.. beating my head against a brick wall. The Javanese here are doing exactly the same thing. ' [EL7:339].

There were three staff in the laboratory, and Graham had tried to work with the boss; 'In the past I have whinged to Ibu Mar - but "water off a duck's back" comes to mind! I don't argue with anybody - that's why I used to get grey hairs! (None now since I decided to give up)' [EL13:49]…

'the lab staff don't really want me here interfering, messing about with their lives, making them have to think, basically' [EL7:210]. Work remains strictly in the lab. That goes for everybody! There are no surplus staff but no-one is overworked, despite the occasional complaints of it being busy (they don't know the meaning of the word 'busy'!) Om Leo is excluded from organisational matters. Ibu Mar runs the show and she tends to keep things to herself' [EL13:36-38] Like many other volunteers, Graham thought that his colleagues' accounts often contradicted their perceptions of reality with strategic intent:

> 'Misunderstandings are so rife, with them trying to please you rather than tell you the truth. Sometimes I just want to be told something really shitty, rather than hear them tell me what they think I want to hear' [EL7:90]. 'There is a lot of "lip service" (*omong kosong*) about needing me here… but that's what it is; they don't really want to learn, to change' [EL7:80].

After six months, the volunteer had started to 'realise that things would never change… that this was an unfeasible posting' in Indonesia [EL7:78-80]. In his view, the posting was not a response to need; it didn't help that it was two thirds funded by VSO [EL7:86]. 'The job has got nothing to do with VSO. It's about changing attitudes, and that is not a two year training job; especially where there is no mechanism for teaching' [EL7:98]. Graham perceived an overwhelming contradiction between his own safe lab practice and general attitudes to safety in society:

> 'They walk around in bare feet, and I keep my shoes on. … for health and safety at work. In case you drop some tube of hot boiling liquid onto bare feet... you know, you get burnt. But this is thinking about consequences, you see, thinking about accidents. But I give up, because I see things like people riding on the top of buses hurtling round mountain passes, and I think if that's the general attitude, they're not going to listen to a piddly little thing like walking around the lab in bare feet' [EL7:283-286]

In the first year of this placement, awareness of contradiction led the volunteer to develop an account of cultural difference. Transgressing by taking for granted the intention of the hospital to develop, and sharing the experience of contradiction with high status professionals from a different ethnic group, the volunteer only served to strengthen the classification between the technologically-advanced and those who neither needed nor wanted such advancement. As is clear from the extracts included here, the volunteer had thereby formed an account of cultural difference as an explanation which ran through the whole of our extended interviews.

The contradictions between an account of modernising development and the lives of local people figured prominently in another placement, but the volunteer had solved them in a subtly different way. Where Graham had decided that his colleagues were not ready for development, Pete rejected accounts of his placement which were framed in terms of development. After his first year in Sumba, Pete wrote: 'My work post is not why I'm here, but the contact with people is… I can't say I wish to change my relationships. I'd like to be friends with a couple of teachers outside work. I'd be happy to do more teacher-training things (work on methodology etc) with my counterpart, but it's not a priority and I think the success of this placement doesn't hinge on how much I affect his work' [S4:80-81]. He clarified this thinking in a subsequent interview:

> 'My attitude has certainly changed through the time I've been here. Started without clear ideas; now I wouldn't get stressed about work related things. Earlier I was still training

> teachers, so getting frustrated. Whereas now I accept teaching their lessons, without them being there, i.e. with Pak Hila at SMUK Thomas, Waitabula.. 'he's a really nice guy which is why I like going there, but I know he won't come in....' [S4:145]

It wasn't that Pete was disengaged. One of the science teachers at SMUK Thomas commented to me: 'Pete is teaching every Thursday here, the students love that. On Weds evenings he has a teachers' meeting, rotating round from teacher to teacher' [S3:29]. A close teaching colleague of the volunteer told me how they used to plan together, in the afternoon, all the stages of the next day's lessons [S5:26]. Domi considered Pete to be humble and down-to-earth [S5:46], and unlikely to make a fuss:

> If things are wrong, he'll just keep quiet. And then for instance, show how it should have been by actions. He doesn't want to offend, he is sensitive to others. But open with me, we are pretty close (cukup akrab) since we've been together, done a lot together. [S5:68]

Pete participated in educational activities in the region, and even started up an after school club for children at his base school, but refused to be positioned as a development worker: 'I'm interested in the area of development, but not as it's approached by VSO. I never said I did development work, so what's the problem? I don't even wish to raise the standard of teaching in this area. I'm pragmatic, but I do my job with a full heart, because I really want to make a connection with people, to understand them and myself a bit better. [letter to programme officer, S4:62]. Pete refuses to present his work or life in Sumba in terms of the progression that is implicit in much development discourse:

> 'I get restless being at school if I'm not teaching… I can't cope with the teachers' conversations. I originally wanted to be just one of the teachers but it didn't happen. My Indonesian friends are not my colleagues. I've never team taught with any success. The teachers don't understand what we're trying to do: they still think I come as the interesting white guy to motivate their students. I don't think it will ever work. I much prefer riding around the countryside and maybe getting down to the beach…
>
> Sometimes people come over in the evenings for a chat. It suddenly feels like I know quite a few people - it's nice to see people in town. I never walk anywhere in town because I don't like the attention and I can't relax. This used to bother me but it doesn't any more since I've moved. Now it seems like a small price to pay for living here' [Pete's second report, Dec 1997, S4:97-98].

Pete came to epitomise a dilemma for the volunteer agency with his sustained rejection of their development discourse. Talking with me, he noted the distance between

> 'going into school here and teaching, and hanging around with a few teachers, and then going to the [volunteer] conference and talking about VSO's impact on English teaching in Indonesia… It's laughable, they start talking about how it's better to work at primary level as well, [so that the students go] on to another VSO at middle school, to ensure better progression. They seem to forget there are only twenty VSO English teachers in the country...' [S4:193].

In his reply to Pete's report, the programme officer polices his transgression:

> 'It may be a good idea to re-read section 5 which was a description of your daily life at the placement and consider what messages you're sending out to prospective volunteers who may read it. Did you mean to sound so negative? If these are your true feelings… then it may be worth asking yourself why you are requesting an extension' [Jan 1998, S4:102].

Rejecting the ideal of development did not answer all the contradictions that Pete perceived. Faced with violent enforcement of the classification between teacher and pupil, Pete chose to withdraw, just as Joanne had:

> 'My worst experience so far was sitting in a lesson which was incredibly bad. My gran could teach Chinese better… [S4:94] … two hours, the kids being asked to read a passage about radar installation: they couldn't even count to ten. The teacher went round listening to them, and hitting them on the head: more shame than pain, but hitting the boys quite hard. He must have hit twenty... I sat there getting more uncomfortable, and thinking, when was it going to end; then he hit one more and I just got up and walked out and rode off, didn't speak to him, trembling as you do when you're just so... He says that the students are just stupid [S4:123-124] I haven't seen him since. I wanted to hit the sod' [S4:94].

As he does at the end of this quote, Pete often used humour as an alternative to transgression. I listened to Pete and Anna after a meal as they put on coats against the rain, mimicing the questioning about the obvious they endured every day. Again, Bhabha's (1990) 'other' silently appears:

> At the end of the warung meal, Pete and Anna went into their Indonesian survival routine: "are you getting your waterproofs on Anna?" [S4:197].

Pete's stated preference for 'riding around on the beach' is a humorous transgression out of an identity based on the practice of development. Learning comes through this humorous play, but it is not that unpredictable learning with which transgression is associated. Instead, it creates a sense of solidarity among those who participate in it, against those who are the target.

In this placement, the volunteer developed an account which was qualitatively different from that of other volunteers, in that he refused to evaluate his experience with reference to concepts of progression and development. The reaction of the programme officer shows how far that reference is expected, which fits with the concept of the social world of volunteering developed in Chapter Two. This volunteer's transgression against this expectation makes clearer what is already evident to a greater or lesser extent in other placements examined here: that a discourse of development is not a necessary rationale for participants. 'To do one's job with a full heart, to make a connection with people, to understand them and myself a bit better' can be better understood in relation to frameworks of solidarity and common humanity. How many other volunteers lack the language to express their particular and distinctive view of their work?

The final placement in this study of early stages was located in a technical high school in Bajawa, Flores. The volunteer teacher of mechanical engineering quickly became aware of contradictions between local engineering practice and his own commitment to quality. So did others:

> 'If we take a motorbike to his house to be fixed, but with a copied part rather than an original, he won't do it. He doesn't want to do half a job. But he doesn't want money: he says his pay in the UK is enough. He likes cigarettes instead… His house is very poor, but

> he's happy with it, and doesn't want the one the head-teacher offered him. ' [civil servant in Bajawa, personal communication, Feb 1998, WF7:89].

Few high quality materials were available when the volunteer (Ben) arrived, and his principal teaching colleague had adopted a very different attitude to engineering practice:

> 'Pak Yulius is a bodger... He has the knowledge and skill to become a good mechanical skills teacher but if he continues in the present methods then its not worth me being here. He is after all the local man that everybody knows... On the few occasions that I have been able to run practical classes the students are as keen as mustard to learn new ways. This is often undermined by Pak Yulius instilling the attitude 'oh well that's all well and good in England but we don't have the tools or facilities here to do it that way'… Unless I can obtain funding to equip the workshop for training it's a total waste of time and money me being here.' [Ben, letter to programme office, May 1996, WF7:7-9].

Ben's advice to volunteers in similar posts to his was, '…Don't be afraid to assert yourself, tactfully if necessary' [WF7:77]. Ben had been assertive in constructing a context for negotiation from the very beginning of his placement. Initially unable to express himself in Indonesian, he arranged for a translation. A nearby volunteer

> '… helped me through the first few days and managed to convey the message to them that I'm not a formal guy, and that I say what I think, and the message got back [from the head], thank God for that, 'cause we're not formal either. And they're not' [Ben, WF7:128].

Aware of the contradictions between the aims of improving practical training, the available equipment and the commitment of colleagues, Ben focused on the availability of materials. He set out to write proposals and begging letters - 'I must have written over a hundred… I'm not a teacher - I may have taught four lessons in my time - I'm a procurement officer' [WF7:126].

The head was a 'bit iffy' when Ben stayed at home in the early days writing proposals, but then another VSO mechanic came through and had a long talk to him about how long it took to write proposals.

> 'It was great having Willy over to… explain to the head teacher what I was trying to achieve. It seems to have calmed him down a bit and also made him more open to suggestions' [letter, May 1996, WF7:5]. 'He said to me, take a couple of weeks off and work on that then… It took a while to get the head used to the idea that I'm not going to apel on Monday mornings' [interview, March 1998, WF7:128-131].

In this placement, the volunteer transgressed intentionally from the start, practising engineering to a much higher quality than the local norm, and expecting others to aspire to the same. His colleague reacted with an account of the classification between his local conditions and the UK, emphasising the lack of high quality materials and the need for compromise. The volunteer's response was to set out to find a way of overcoming this classification through applying for special funding. Such actions developed the context for negotiation between the volunteer and close colleagues.

### Summary

Those volunteers who become aware of significant contradiction without sharing this with colleagues, or without transgressing and perhaps thereby developing a network of likeminded colleagues, appear to construct an account of the difference between themselves and their

colleagues. This account is typically shared with those who are thereby constructed as similar: other volunteers, volunteer agency staff and other expatriates. Within the institution, the account is associated with difficulty in sharing information, little sharing of material resources, and is strengthened through physical isolation; in other words, it is associated with the strengthening of the classification between volunteer and colleagues. This is a pattern we saw in SMUK Augustine; at the hospital in Ende, and in the initial stage of the first case study in Chapter Five.

The six placements explored here reinforce the understanding that, whenever and wherever they occur, shared explanations of perceived contradiction and acts of transgression prove to be significant learning processes, revealing the way in which resources are influenced by classification in the community of practice. Participants learn how various social resources are subject to classification: how the food budget in the hospital at Waikabubak can be diverted by the management without protest from the staff, just as student grades at Baik Hati are under management control; the extent to which the organisation of the laboratory at Ende is controlled by the senior technician without reference to the hospital director. Perhaps most significantly, the reactions of other participants to transgression reveal their positioning in relation to that particular classification. Where the classification concerned is in the interest of the institutional leadership, transgression by the volunteer can result in their marginalisation from the work of the institution, and in extreme cases, for one volunteer in the study area, their being asked to leave [M8]. The same transgression can create feelings of solidarity and a network of mutual support among those colleagues who lose out from the classification.

We have also seen how the effect on participants' accounts depends on the identity of these colleagues. If they are of different ethnicity from those who are seen to control resources, for example, the result may be a strengthening of accounts of difference along ethnic lines, as where Graham and the Javanese doctors reinforced their account of cultural difference.

The greater awareness of classifications and their effects which is generated by the learning processes described here constitutes the context for negotiation between participants in their efforts to get things done. As the volunteer in the hospital at Waikabubak put it, 'working out the relationships between people and why things are as they are took a year'. But at the end of that year, given the occurrence of these processes of learning, participants are known to each other, and in a position to know what, how and with whom it is worth trying to get something done. In the next section, I explore the subsequent effects of these learning processes.

### Effects of learning in the second stage of volunteer placements

I want to look at the effects of learning in the next stages of placements by describing some of the significant social and personal effects which developed. I will continue to do this by focusing on the process of distribution of social resources which occurs, often through negotiation, with reference to participants' developing accounts. In each case I will also look for examples of any unintended effects of these developments.

***Projects***

One of the most common effects of these learning processes is the development of a 'project'. As we have seen, many volunteers give accounts of their placement in relation to a development framework, and they experience a contradiction when they observe the slow pace and extent of change, needing to justify their presence in a school or hospital eight thousand miles from home. Not only that, but volunteers find themselves the subject of others' classification as foreigners; more autonomous working arrangements are a chance to reduce the significance of that positioning. The projects which many develop represent a new classification of material resources, time, space, and information, constituting autonomous work over which volunteers have far more control, and often sidestepping the classifications of gender, or between management and workers, which dominate the institution. Projects often involve a group of colleagues detached from the hierarchy of the base institution, and invite the prospect of achieving some change in the limited time available. In two of the case studies (I and III) certainly, volunteers gained enormous satisfaction from the projects they had developed in this way.

The social process by which such projects come about often involves negotiation. In the first placement discussed in this chapter, the volunteer's marginalisation within the school and his identification with other marginalised teachers created a context for negotiating a detached role in working with English teachers. Another teacher of English, Pak Gabriel, was also considered transgressive in relation to the authorities, and negotiations with him led to an important breakthrough:

> He was one of the 'key teachers' in PKG (a nationwide inservice training system for three subjects including English, funded by the World Bank); he had to be, he was the best English teacher for miles. And the instructors hated him… because he took this flexible attitude, relatively, to how we approached the curriculum. They probably didn't want him there, and he quit. That was a point where it was impossible to get key teachers. And they were twisting his arm, twisting his arm, until eventually he gave in. And insisted that I came on board and actually there was a big sea-change [Rob, S14:91].

Rob describes their negotiation of a working relationship, which did not depend on a common approach to English teaching:

> 'He was extraordinarily supportive of me, within the structure, always arguing for me to have a bigger role. But he wasn't particularly interested in what I was doing, and I wasn't interested after a while in doing that with him… that didn't seem the most appropriate relationship. He wanted to speak better English… We would sit and talk about things, discuss things… I would go to him and say look I don't understand this, can you help me with this please? … He was very successful. But I don't think that the kind of things I was doing fitted very well with what he was doing… He had to be exam-orientated, and curriculum led' [S14:91]

Changes in classroom methodology had not been the main outcome of Pak Gabriel's working relationship with Rob. When I asked him for examples of features of his practice which derived from his work with Rob, he replied:

> Pak Gabriel: Well (a bit hesitant...) well yes, drawings, stick figures for example: how to use them to communicate ideas. But the main thing was that he was a great source of

> spoken English: phrases, pronunciation…. When Rob left, he gave a lot of good books to me, and dictionaries [S6:10]

This relationship gave Rob access to the inservice training meetings, and an informal group grew around some of the teachers Rob met there. Ibu Lin came across as a dynamic, highly competent teacher, professional and smart even in the heat of the noonday sun after a long morning at school.

> 'Rob is a friend of mine… I don't mind you using my name … I first knew Rob through an SMP teacher's meeting, he would help with vocabulary and grammatical problems, and in teaching techniques: in line with the instructions from the government. Once a week, and would help in the drawing up of lesson plans, with special terms' [Ibu Lin, S7:8].

Ibu Lin described Rob's commitment to working with teachers:

> 'If say only two out of fifteen would turn up for a meeting in the afternoon, he would say, I really value your coming, are you ready to get going? Yes, are you? OK, let's get started..... Then he would ask if I wanted to come and watch him teach... In this way we would help each other improve. I would tell him if I didn't understand clearly the point he was making, and vice versa' [Ibu Lin, S7:46].

Rob tells me that she is from neighbouring West Timor and very shy, which was not my impression. 'Well, shy in things like PKG (the government inservice training scheme)… in this group of strong male Catholic teachers that ran the English clique, she was a Protestant female' [S14:167]. Rob quickly outlines the classifications that kept her quiet. Rob believes that he sidesteps such classifications himself:

> 'Certainly for myself, the first reaction for me would be to strip away all that, and go down to something basic that seemed the same. The first time I met Ibu Lin was at PKG, and it was such a stilted experience, and yet I got on well with her because, in my view we were both teachers. I actually thought teachers were being abused by this system, PKG'. [S14:330].

As Rob learnt more about the lives of his teacher colleagues, he became more flexible and imaginative about ways of working with them.

> 'The story around VSO at the time was that the only way you could get teachers together doing training outside school was to give them money. And I wasn't going to go with any of that rubbish. Until it became blatantly obvious that it wasn't as simple as that. That 'my colleagues have a lot of work to do...' is absolutely true and they don't have much money… A group from a government-sponsored organisation approached me and asked me to give them English lessons and I said "I'm afraid I'm not allowed to. What I can do though, is I can get a group of Indonesian teachers to do it with me, and we'll do it together" [S14:151].

The project developed because Rob was aware of the classification between him and his teacher colleagues, and was able to negotiate a way through it:

> 'Suddenly there was this opportunity to do a training course for Indonesian teachers on real subjects, getting paid a fortune. And what we did was we split it five ways, and the idea was that my bit was then going to go into a fund to carry on doing these sorts of things. … Generating funding … wasn't an important activity in itself, but it gave us a way in to them having respectability, a job out of work but that supported their work. We did a couple of hours preparation, we probably did as many hours preparation as we did teaching, so we probably did eight hours a week, but I think a month each person was getting a couple of hundred thousand. So it was a serious supplement to their salary. And we were doing some really interesting points' [Rob, S14:151].

This was a project that Ibu Lin mentioned the same project to me, without talking about the money, a fact which surprised Rob. But perhaps it is not surprising that she was able to be more open about Rob with me than she was about herself.

> 'Aside from that, he also helped a lot with the group Waskita Karya, with their presentation which they took to Hong Kong and then onto Europe, about the dam project. A group of four English teachers, myself, Pak Yohanes, Pak Agus, one other and Rob, would meet them once a week to help them prepare with English. They succeeded, went on to Europe with it' [S7:12].

Negotiation is very evident in this process, as participants come to agreement on how to share time, material resources and information. Through negotiation, a group of English teachers hitherto classified as irrelevant outside school were able to obtain some benefit from globalisation, remuneration for preparing a group associated with government to visit Europe.

In other placements too, processes of learning led to negotiated opportunities for work beyond the boundaries of the institution. Although Anna's placement was in the hospital in Waikabubak, it had become clear to her after a year that she would achieve little through her work there. She began to create a project of her own. It was '… not ideal, to be paid by the hospital and work elsewhere, there's some resentment over that…' [S2:171] but she had kept the director 'friendly' by avoiding challenging him over corruption. Her primary commitment was to developing the practice of community-based nutrition, and after visiting the village health posts, she decided she could work more effectively with the local village volunteers.

> 'Seeing in situ the role that the kaders could play, and finding out that there is a community health centre budget for training them... They are volunteers, and one of the good moments was getting VSO to pay for the production of a tee-shirt for them, with the basic parts of a healthy diet on it… I visit the clinics, do on the job training there, usually they ask me to give a talk, sermon... it's reaching a much wider group of people. That's really felt good, identifying a need' [S2: 122-128]. 'Motivation comes from positive contacts with mothers I am able to advise from the villages' [S2:247].

Anna considered that she may have had an effect

> 'on the way kaders are viewed, since I am prepared to get on my bike and go through difficult journeys to train them and visit. *Andy*: Why, do they comment on that at the local Health Department? like "oh you're off again, amazing! " *Anna*: I get that all the time' [S2:140].

Her negotiating stance with the kaders and women in villages is noticed:

> 'When staff from Puskesmas visit Posyandus they rarely talk with the kaders except to give orders' [S2: 214] 'Probably my biggest impact is not in terms of nutritional awareness raising but in alternative ways of working. For instance, they would usually shout at mothers whose child isn't growing well. I'll sit down, find out about the situation and give advice specific to that, the best options available. That was picked up once, I've just remembered: at a training day for Puskesmas staff, about giving advice: 'see the way Anna does it, always with a smile' [S2: 149-151].'Also, effect on mothers attending the clinics… Most of them will just accept what I say, without saying much. The lippy ones come out with comments like, "well its all right for you". They're always very friendly, but I realise that they do have very restricted chance to do anything much about what I say. They can't see the necessity of perhaps selling a chicken to buy milk powder. Still when they do have more money....' [S2: 147]

The development of these projects was an alternative to further transgression. Rather than struggling with the institutional leadership over the classification of material resources and positioning, these volunteers negotiated their way out of the institution, getting to know people that they could work with and the kinds of activities appropriate to furthering their intentions. They grew increasingly aware of the classifications which their colleagues and they were subject to, and were able to negotiate access to additional resources.

### *Unintended outcomes of projects*

Volunteers can misrecognise the relationship of a project to the community of practice in which it is located. During my own period as a volunteer, my primary commitment as a teacher / 'upgrader' [Appendix I] in schools in a coastal town in Irian Jaya was to the indigenous Irianese, marginalised in their own provincial town. After a year there I had written to a friend in Europe describing what I saw as ‘Irianese culture ... coming under siege. Everything about official Merauke - including schools, local governments, hospitals… is foreign to the Irianese coming from the interior. The church too has very little link with the indigenous culture...’ [Appendix I: 49]. I recognised the contradiction of my position: ‘Here I am, working for an organisation that is closely linked with this Catholic church, trying to improve the level of educational attainment of Irianese children, in terms of the Western... scientific tradition’ [Appendix I: 49]. The contradiction could be summed up as 'development through enculturation', and my response was to develop a project.

Initially my participation with the staff in my home school had been limited by language difference, but I remained at a distance while creating a laboratory and centre there for practically-based teaching and inservice training, with a strong focus on the wealth of the Irianese environment. Only later did I became aware of how I had marginalised myself within the school community.

I had set up the lab with the help of keen students, politely refusing the offers of non-science teachers. In doing so I divorced myself from the body of the school, and from the more general advice that teachers would have been able to give me. I learned to enjoy the autonomy of my own space in the laboratory, and spent time building up networks of science teachers in other institutions. My visits to the school staffroom developed into a habit of friendly but inconsequential conversations with those teachers who based themselves there… When I gave any thought to the effect of the laboratory development on the school, it was that it would raise the status of the institution.

I started with five classes, including the year two science stream, who depended on me as their physics teacher for the next year and a half. When this group had left school, I had a party for them at home; there are pictures of a confident group of Irianese and Javanese students cooking and chatting in my back yard. I think most of them had been fascinated by my ignorance of some of the most obvious facts in their life, and my desire to learn from them; together with my continuous attempt to provoke them to meaningful learning in physics, this made for a strong impression both ways… Some of the more successful of them have kept in touch by letter as they have gone through university.

By contrast, my relationship with most teachers in the school, such as Pak Jak, the influential pastoral head of the school and main disciplinarian, had remained cordial but distant. Then just before my return to the UK I learned of his negative perceptions of my work, demonstrating something of the tensions that my autonomous style and critical attitude had provoked. I had taken the opportunity of an end-of-year meeting deciding on students' progression within the school to speak of my misgivings about raising the marks of failing students; afterwards, I angrily recorded how

> "Pak Jak and I had a little talk. He told me that I didn't understand a thing about the situation here. And added that half my [year 1] Physics class skived because I wasn't angry enough with them. I have never seen the point in treating SMU kids as kids - they are after all there by choice… According to Pak Jak's worldview, there is a benefit in our SMU kids sitting in classrooms churning out nonsense (what is nonsense for them). This is preparation for life…" (diary, 16th June, 1995)

As in the previous two examples, I had created a project, negotiating additional resources and developing a network of like-minded professionals. But I had not been aware of how far I had become insulated from the mainstream teachers in the school, and how disengaged from negotiations over the philosophy of education there. It was a contradiction that made me painfully aware of the limitations of my project approach. I had confounded my good intentions: by concentrating on developing new practices with a group of like-minded teachers from other schools, I had repositioned myself further from central colleagues in my base institution. This was a common problem: commenting on this episode in my case study, Rob commented on 'how many of us faced exactly the same thing' [ajhjonny]. Projects are the product of a learning process, and they often effectively meet the needs of participants, but in doing so they can exclude people and create new classifications.

### *Solidarity*

Solidarity, absent in this last example between teachers at my school and myself, is sometimes a product of participants' learning, related to the extent to which the volunteer becomes an insider. Yet the notion of solidarity problematises the meaning of insider status. The development of solidarity incorporates the building of relationships through getting things done; an acceptance of mutual evaluation, and therefore some sharing of values in a way that echoes Barth's (1969) account of the working of ethnic groups. The term solidarity does not appear frequently in volunteers' or colleagues' accounts. But a close Indonesian concept was significant for the boss of a rural development NGO in West Timor. Emphasising the need for regular visits to villagers who were taking a lead in community development, he said he had concluded that

> 'to feel that they shared the same fate ('senasib'), was of utmost importance to fieldstaff, stuck and often cut off from other people to talk to of similar background. Entertainment and diversion is vital. To share thoughts with someone, eat with them' [T6:83 ].

In this NGO, the development of a sense of solidarity as shared fate or shared position in the world involves making an effort to be physically together, sharing thoughts and laughing in the face of a common adversity. 'It's not really money that strengthens people to carry on. One of the field staff about to retire said that; "don't just come and see the program, come and see us as well" ' [T6:84].

For some volunteers (e.g. case study I and II) religion is an expression of common values; but the development of solidarity involves sharing more than values. If through the distribution of social resources people are positioned on different sides of a classification, then the development of solidarity between them is restricted. An Irianese friend in Merauke described the distinctive position of a Indonesian priest compared to a European one in terms of his position on the same side of the classification of poverty:

> 'Pastors from Indonesia like Pastor Purwo, can say with experience, 'we all have to start from nothing, think together, struggle together, use our own resources, look after our own children, take responsibility, involve both old and young'. Whereas Western pastors - the people think - he's definitely rich (has his own money), will help people himself (the widow and children): and sure enough he will give, and that will be that, he doesn't think any further' [Appendix I:53].

Indonesian people do not generally expect to find solidarity with 'orang Barat' (Westerners). During the 1997 crisis, many people believed that volunteers were gaining from the fall in value of the rupiah: a volunteer explained that 'the monetary crisis is bad for volunteers, no increase in salary but no-one will believe that you're not rich with dollars!!' [T8:47]. Volunteers have long been seen as tourists, particularly by an Indonesian youth 'teasing itself with the pleasures of the transgressive Other', to ironically coopt a phrase of Hall's (1991, p.31) on life at the leading edge of capitalism. Phil (case study II) was one of many volunteers, including myself, who grew frustrated at such positioning. When solidarity is an aspiration, mockery based on difference is galling.

For it is the case that volunteers and colleagues are similarly positioned in terms of many social resources: broadly speaking they have similar access to money, food and drink, clothes, transport and communication, and suffer from similar incidence of disease and sickness. The increasing isolation of many places in Indonesia fuel costs rose during the economic crisis hit volunteers and colleagues alike.

When volunteers experience a sense of alienation, an account of solidarity can be some comfort. Rob wrote, 'I came to the conclusion, when the nothingness hit me, that *just being here* was something - at least to some people, solidarity. This was confirmed when I did leave, when many asked why I was leaving them' [Rob, comment on Appendix I]. As Rob suggests, reconciling the limited duration of the placement with this account of solidarity requires considerable work by both volunteer and colleagues. This is something to be dealt with later.

'Just being here' involves more than physical presence, fundamental though that is. The evidence explored here suggests that 'just being here' constitutes and requires a process of mutual learning about the circumstances of each other's lives, aspirations and fears. In the first place, knowledge of each other's values is imputed through contradiction, transgression and negotiation over the distribution of social resources. People got to know each other's perspectives on how children should be positioned so as to achieve their conformity; how lesson time should be structured in good English lessons; how hospital resources can legitimately be used, and what constitutes an acceptable level of cleanliness in a laboratory. In doing so, they learnt about they and others were

positioned in relation to the classifications behind existing resource distributions, and about the identities and values that were associated with change and with the status quo.

By and large, the associations formed after transgression are between those who are marginalised by existing classifications: outsiders in one way or another, who do not have a vested interest in the existing hierarchy. In these placements, these were often women. Moreover, it was often these same colleagues who, apart from the volunteers themselves, had the highest expectations prior to the volunteer's arrival. They had the most to gain from disruption to the existing distribution of resources and prevailing accounts, and received the most confirmation from the volunteer's transgressive actions and awareness of contradiction.

Through learning then, an appreciation of each other's values slowly develops, along with knowledge of each other's positioning. At Baik Hati, Ibu Lin related how

> 'One time we were meeting and Rob had asked us to bring materials; Pak Yohanes came without them and blamed his wife, saying that he had told her to pack them. Rob retorted 'Was it you or your wife who's going to be using them?' [Ibu Lin, S7:42].

In the context of their existing relationship, Yohanes accepted this as a legitimate challenge by Rob to the classification by gender. Ibu Lin took notice of that and recalled it three years later: this was significant learning for her, confirming her own account of patriarchy. For Rob, this exemplified the way in which it was

> 'all about working together, effectiveness on relationships and mutual understanding… [Pak Yohanes] used to drive me mad… But we, we got on well, his heart was in the right place, and I'd forgive him that sort of thing. In exactly the same way as I'm sure they forgave me the stupid things that I did because we got on well' [S14:266].

Such moral engagement between volunteer and colleague stands in contrast to the relationship between foreign pastors and the people among whom they worked:

> On the question of faith and teaching: the people never really understood the missionaries, in terms of what they should do from day to day. Whereas the Indonesian pastor explains in those terms exactly; the foreign pastor could never make the people ask themselves "Saya pantaskah, tidak?" (Am I living a right life, or not?) And the same with nuns: the Indonesians can get involved with the affairs of the family. The Europeans could never be in this position...' [Appendix I:53].

Volunteers' connections with their family members are often highly significant to Indonesian colleagues, as further evidence of shared values. Strong accounts of solidarity were precipitated when volunteer's parents or children visited them in their placements. These visits were memorable for colleagues, and worthy of mention, as they were for the colleague quoted in Chapter One: 'you've got a mum and a dad who care about you and a sister.. and we've seen your mum, she's come here'. Teachers at Augustine told me how Joanne's parents had visited and taken photographs which were in the laboratory. Alicia (case study III) was amazed at the reaction to her mother's visit: '… A lot of people came every day to meet her and to bring presents. My colleagues and people from the community make her feel at home' [M12:38-40]. David's colleagues (case study I) told me several times about his weekly phonecall from his brother in the UK. Evidence of the shared value of family relationships strengthens colleagues' accounts of solidarity with volunteers.

Projects can stimulate the development of solidarity with particular groups. David (case study I) had experienced the patriarchy of the educational system, and the power of a residential workshop to create an apparently egalitarian community, albeit temporarily. He mentions several women teachers who made use of the opportunities that he and Moira were offering in their Saturday morning workshops, and notes that women tend to prefer to work with Moira than with him. They were, it appears, beginning to constitute another community of practice, in which 'pronunciation, grammar, structure' were less highly valued than methodology [EL30:25], challenging the existing patriarchal educational order.

Solidarity between volunteers and colleagues is always partial, but the classification between them on the basis of power and position can be all but dissolved as they struggle against other classifications in context.

### *Unintended outcomes of solidarity*

Solidarity is inevitably partial and tenuous between volunteers and colleagues. We have seen volunteers using humour against their colleagues to create a sense of solidarity between themselves, whilst also aspiring 'to do one's job with a full heart, to make a connection with people, to understand them and myself a bit better': an expression of solidarity in common humanity. Solidarity with a particular group must also be solidarity against a common threat; solidarity becomes destructive if that threat is identified with another group. In this case, as with ethnic identity, solidarity involves the construction of a boundary which 'canalizes social life' (Barth, 1969 p.15), insulating the group from interaction with others and generating increased distrust and tension. Such a situation characterised Graham's solidarity with his Javanese friends against people from Flores. To avoid this development requires careful boundary work, exemplified by Rob's not wanting to be identified with any particular group to the exclusion of others.

Within a relationship of solidarity, transgression can be threatening. Yet in the face of some classifications, recurring transgression is unavoidable for the volunteer. One result of this are accounts by the volunteer of his or her 'madness' or 'stupidity'. Alicia was happier that people said ' "she was crazy" but they move a little bit to here.... rather than try and adapt and end up changing nothing' [M1:154]. When she could not sit through the animal killing as part of the dedication of a bamboo building, she excused herself as a 'stupid' Westerner [caseton:114]. In this way she preserved the account of solidarity by making a safe space for transgression, locating her deviance as a cultural anomaly.

As a volunteer myself, it took time to achieve this balance. After three months in Merauke, I had written 'there is no room to move, for fear of being branded the mad, love-sick Westerner - there's no anonymity here. I stand out like I'm half-naked all the time' [Appendix I:42]. Later, I learnt to describe myself jokingly to Indonesian friends as 'gila' (mad), as an excuse for transgressive behaviour. In Flores, the colleague of a former volunteer remembered him as 'a bit crazy, in a good way' [EL4:35].

Accounts of madness provide a context for transgression without the associated threat to existing relationships. Some of those volunteers who do not form such accounts confuse several concepts related to participation: sensitivity and adaptation. They make over-strenuous efforts to fit in, and risk losing their identity; no longer themselves, they are in some senses are no longer participating in the placement.

> ‘The volunteers who leave early are often those who no longer know who they are, because they tried to fit in too much.’ [volunteer programme director in Indonesia, April 1998, jak1:13].

## Understanding other changes with respect to learning

Learning processes in the placement can lead to the construction of projects and the development of solidarity. The effects of other changes in the placement can also be explained through attention to the learning of participants. Participants' accounts of change are a significant factor in shifting their position in relation to others.

### *Opportunities for negotiation in a changing context*

The notion of the community of practice is a reminder that many changes can influence the context of negotiation, including new participants (not only the volunteer) and material resources. When the context changes, negotiation can lead to new activities and collaboration. Teachers at SMUK Augustine reported a major change in the school, when I asked them what had caused such a dramatic change in the volunteer's role from year one to year three:

> 'Alo was clear: the important thing was the change of head-teacher. … Frater Marius really supports science, even wants to turn this into a specialist science school. He gives a lot of encouragement to teachers who want to develop. For instance, generally speaking all teachers are expected to give extra lessons on Saturday mornings, but when Joanne was here, those teachers who attended her activities were excused' [fieldnotes, March 1998, S3:21].

The new headteacher at Waitabula understood how Joanne could be involved in change. Up to this point, Joanne had been on the periphery of the institution, but the headteacher had hired two more science teachers, and they were expected to work with her. The arrival of three significant people in a school marks a major change in the negotiation context. Some existing classifications are removed with the new headteacher, and the volunteer is able to begin a new account of her experience in which she is positioned, as she wrote excitedly to her programme officer:

> 'I've more or less definitely decided that I would like to extend until the end of the first term. I've not spoken to Frater again... he has recently employed a teacher who though at the moment is teaching biology temporarily, I am to train to be the lab co-ordinator! I was pretty amazed about this and very pleased that he can see the benefit of practical science and values the work I've been doing' [Nov 1996, S11:27].

Joanne became a key person in the development of practical science. The teachers told me, 'we started to do practicals with each class… once every three weeks for each subject… we've been inviting other schools in, teachers, even students' [S3:13]. Field trips were encouraged, and had an effect on the relationship between Joanne and new science teachers. '…She was a real colleague by

the end, and she cried when she left, but not with frustration and disappointment as she had soon after she came; rather with sadness at a good friend leaving' [S3:15].

The input of material resources at the technical school in Bajawa significantly altered the context for negotiation. Ben had already negotiated the freedom to work when it suited him, 'as long as I do the hours'. But the embassy grants for workshop machinery which he obtained for the school had changed the attitude of staff towards his plan for high-quality engineering education: 'All the staff are now very enthusiastic and want to progress at a rate that is perhaps unrealistic. This is possibly due to the sudden influx of tools and equipment and once the initial euphoria has ebbed a little bit then perhaps we can get down to some serious planning for the short, medium and long term' [WF7:72].

Ben and Yulius subsequently worked together, negotiating good practice: 'he is basically a very good teacher, trained at the very well equipped technical training college in Malang and knows what a proper job is. In the time he'd been at the school, some of this good practice had gone, the effect of the culture… I think if we can only hold onto this through another cycle, he'll stay good'. What is good practice? 'It centres around doing a thorough job of work, with good quality parts, in a systematic way, good technique, etc. I've taught him some of this, he's seen some ways of doing things which he hadn't thought of before and which actually make work easier'.

Ben cited two examples which demonstrated Yulius's change of attitude over two years: that he now only used original parts on his own bike, and that after they had done some work on one of the water authority vehicles, Yulius negotiated the installation of a water supply to the school 'off his own bat'. 'He had the kids from Building Section digging the trenches.. I was really chuffed at that, he wouldn't have done that a year ago, it would have been money in his back pocket....' [WF7: 159-165].

In both these placements, volunteers and colleagues were able to take advantage of changes in the context, and through negotiation they redistributed social resources (the use of time and place, the position of different participants, information and material resources) to change aspects of practice in their institutions. The accounts that they formed of the new context describe their own repositioning and that of their colleagues, contributing to the new possibilities.

### *Reactions to external resource pressures*

We have seen how a change in the internal resources at Augustine and in the technical school in Bajawa led to an enormous change in the character of the placement, through the negotiation of participants. Similar effects can occur when the availability of resources is influenced by the external context. The effects of economic crisis, the opening of new transport routes or a natural disaster such as earthquake on the placement depend on participants' accounts and on the structured distribution of resources, and have an effect on both.

For example, there is a widespread shortage of science teachers in Eastern Indonesia, putting the volunteer agencies in a position to negotiate placements that they consider more developmental, including an element of teacher upgrading. As at Dola (case study I) this upgrading work takes

volunteers out of the home institution for part of each week; bearing in mind the teacher shortage, this requires negotiation with the headteacher. Some volunteers, like David, go along with the headteacher's wishes: a volunteer in West Timor hoped that in the next stage of his placement, 'I do less teaching (unlikely since the school needs science teachers)' [T9:39]. But a volunteer in Flores failed to negotiate, according to the account of a colleague at the school. He transgressed across the classification between teachers and headteacher:

> 'Instead of working in the school first, until the head came to know him and could trust him, he wanted to be out and about in other schools from day one. And the head couldn't accept this. There were many things to be done in the school first. A: Did anyone try to explain this to the volunteer? L: Yes, but the suster wouldn't have it, and neither would the volunteer' [M8:26-36].

Frustrated by this situation, the volunteer's behaviour became more transgressive, until the head asked him to leave. In this case, other volunteers blamed the attitude of the volunteer or kept away from him; Phil and Ben's accounts served to highlight how they themselves had coped differently with such tensions: 'I can influence the place much more by being positive… [that volunteer] was negative all round, and achieved less than nothing' [Phil, EL11:92] 'What happened to [that volunteer] was basically his own fault, from the time he arrived in Indonesia' [Ben, WF7:135]. The premature end to this placement, and other volunteers' reactions, all demonstrate the importance of negotiation.

The local effects of the economic and political crisis in Indonesia in 1997 and 1998 had effects in many placements. For David (case study I) they provoked awareness of the contradiction between his sheltered position in the centre of the school and that of the regular teachers.

> 'Last Christmas when the price of rice rose, I found out there were teachers in the staffroom who were actually going hungry… eating vegetables to make sure that their children had a proper meal… which made me uncomfortable… an indicator of how I was different to them… me sitting down to three square meals a day, that colleagues I was working with couldn't afford… the gap between me and them became even more pronounced. That's eased now' [EL30:98].

Partly as a result of this awareness, David had negotiated some involvement in schemes designed to alleviate poverty in nearby villages, thereby consolidating his colleagues' account of his 'willingness to help'.

For volunteers without developed networks of colleagues or other volunteers, the instability of a country in crisis becomes a worry: 'Feeling pressured as KRIS-MON (monetary crisis) continues - is Indonesia safe?' [EL17:53]. In contrast, a volunteer who arrived during the crisis felt that the context for exploring contradictions with colleagues was widened:

> 'Because of the changes happening, being in Indonesia as a volunteer… is becoming a more important job; being here as a person from a different culture with different views, that are now listened to in a different way by local people' [WF13:11].

The changing political climate can promote the development of solidarity.

### *Other volunteers and their transgressions*

The arrival of other volunteers often marked a significant change for volunteers already there, and the process of dealing with their transgressions is illuminated by considerations of learning. For volunteers who have negotiated relationships with local people, the need to translate the subtleties of their learning into an account for new arrivals can be quite difficult; perhaps this explains why in Ende, for instance, Graham kept his distance from David, and David in turn from Moira. Eight months after Rob arrived at Baik Hati, two more volunteers were sent to the area, one of them to the same school as a biology teacher:

> Another major change has been the arrival of two more volunteers, not always the blessing it might have been… given that I was mentally prepared for, and had eight months' experience of, being the only volunteer here, whereas they were mentally prepared to go to a place where there was already another volunteer [Rob, S13:25].

For colleagues too, their negotiated understanding with Rob made the arrival of a second volunteer a shock:

> So, we think we're having a volunteer, and she's white… it's going to be great. Because we think that she's expert. That is what we think until she's coming, and we realise that we're going together. And working together. Although our expectation was still to use her as our source of knowledge. Which of course didn't happen. Because to her, she's coming here not for giving knowledge to us, but for working together. So it wasn't matching. But the good thing is that she is easy-going, and we are easy going, so we got on very well. [Eli, S14:188]

Alison refused her positioning as an expert, a transgression which created the context for 'easy-going' negotiations on how she would work with her colleagues. The placement progressed steadily for the first few months. Then, as a teacher in this Catholic school, Alison became involved with a Muslim man. The Catholic school could not deal with this double transgression against the classifications of religion and gender, especially in so high a profile teacher. In nearby Flores, an earlier volunteer had noted:

> 'there is sex, or no sex, should I say… The fact is that here there is no such thing as casual sex…. the simple gesture of holding hands is a very big step in the definite direction of marriage… It is an ultra-sensitive area of human relationship, and the world at large is quick to read messages from it' [EL3:49].

The tension in the school at the time was even reproduced in the section of interview that dealt with it; note the short reponses, the interruptions, the allusions:

> *Andy*: I mean was everybody talking about it? *Eli*: About Alison (?) *Andy*: Yeah. *Eli*: Yes. *Andy*: In the whole school... *Rob*: Well I mean yes and no, I mean they talked but they never.. *Eli*: They wouldn't talk in the front of a white person. *Rob*: Absolutely, they didn't talk in front of me and that was the real, the real nightmare. *Andy*: Oh really! *Rob*: I'd much rather people talked in front of me, 'cause I agreed (laugh) [S14:230-241].

This difficult intercultural situation revealed more of the limits of the negotiated order that the volunteer and teachers had constructed, and the strength of the classification between the Indonesian teachers and the Westerners involved. Ira transgressed against the classification, openly supporting Alison and discussing the situation with Rob. Rob transgressed against the way he was positioned, checking the situation with the volunteer programme director and then arranging a

conversation with the headteacher, 'the only time the two of us sat down… and talked about something in real terms. Man-to man. Which was quite a breakthrough' [S14:175]. This negotiation of positions with the headteacher revealed to both participants the extent of the classification between the volunteering agency and school, with the headteacher assuming that he was forced to keep the volunteer:

> ' I said to [the headteacher] that "you do have the right to say to VSO this is not working, stop". And he didn't really realise that. And it was only after we had that conversation that he took the action that he took. And in fact he asked me to contact Adam. Which was quite a positive step. At least it was a step out of this episode' [S14:175].

The volunteer was positioned in such a way that he could shift the practical balance of power between the volunteer agency and the institution, in favour of the institution.

A volunteer in Flores had to cope with another volunteer

> 'coming to my accommodation… late at night in an extremely drunken state… he damaged my reputation and frightened the people that I was living with… He then threatened me if I were to report his behaviour / condition to the field office in Jakarta'. These events, which ended in tragedy, had only served to increase the classification between local people and the other volunteer, who came to be seen as the 'friend of the madman' [volunteer, EL17:41].

Both of these cases serve to highlight the classification of volunteers together by local people who do not know them well. Dealing with the major transgressions of another volunteer depends on the negotiation context; in those relationships where negotiation is possible, the result can be a deeper appreciation of the distinctive values of each volunteer.

### *The volunteer's approaching departure*

Some of the products of these learning processes become clear as the end of the placement approaches. Greater freedom develops in the negotiated agreements that have been set up between participants. No longer constrained by the consequences, participants see more clearly the temporary nature of the complex, situated social order that they have constructed. Participation in everyday practices has a heightened edge; deeper contradictions are shared, based on highly significant classifications. In the last few months of my placement, for example, Irianese friends pointed out my transgressive behaviour in walking around with single women friends: ‘Irma just came round, and we got down to talking about *terlalu menonjol* – sticking out too much' (diary 23/4/95). Phil and his headteacher had an argument near the end of his placement, and the open discussion between Jan and her colleagues was recorded in her case study.

The volunteers' departure becomes a feature during the placement, entering participants' accounts and influencing the distribution of resources. For volunteers, the approaching end of the placement heightens awareness of their contributions, and they begin to assess their impact. The passage of time becomes a measure of progress. Phil (case study II) talked of a reasonable achievement given the time constraints. An agriculturalist in West Timor spoke of 'a year to learn and a year to get something done' [T7:33], contrasting that approach with a former volunteer, still there and making a career out of development, 'he's working with Oxfam now'. Several times Jane in West Timor

said that staying for twenty years wouldn't be enough. 'I'm tired of the slow pace of change' [T5:59]. in the time frame of the experience.

From the point of view of their close colleagues, the volunteer's departure is an major transgression, violating the established order. In case study II, Elin finds an explanation for his departure in terms acceptable to her: he is thinking of his parents. She also used the limited time remaining to generate a sense of urgency, wanting to get the most out of Phil before he left. I collected some of the detachment stories that volunteers had formed, for example in the name of sustainability: 'I must leave before they begin to rely on me too much'; as a natural cycle: ‘life goes on’; in terms of self-protection: ‘I need to leave before I stopped believing’, or denying the finality of the break: ‘We’ll stay in touch, I’ll be able to come back’. These stories construct a perspective which makes it easier to leave a community which has become home.

## The end of the placement in terms of learning processes

In focusing on the learning processes in placement, we have seen how participants' accounts evolve as significant personal constructions and performing important social functions. Accounts are powerful in their construction of similarity and difference, normality and identity. As contradictions, transgressions, and negotiations occur, participants' accounts become more complex. Later accounts explain, resolve or ignore contradictions between earlier accounts and resource distributions. Accounts tell stories, and these have potentially powerful social effects. We have seen in case study IV how powerful accounts can come to dominate the placement, determining all possibilities for action. Accounts elaborate and depend on a social process, building relationships, constructing positions for other actors, comprising choices about resources.

When the placement is finished, these accounts continue in some form. For the volunteer, it is only accounts that survive. For the colleague, they exist alongside distributions of social resources which may also outlast the placement.

### *Colleagues’ accounts and the distribution of social resources*

Five years after I left Merauke, a government education officer based in the interior of Irian responded to a translation of the case study of my placement [Appendix I]. Though he had been visiting schools observing in classrooms, he gave no sense of any associated change in the practice of science teaching. He described the tough context of his work - he was the only school inspector, transport was difficult and he had been ill. Against that background, he then described the nature of the knowledge I had brought to my placement, and the activities in which I engaged, noting particularly my use of material resources from the local environment, the science centres created as sites for teacher development. He described my approach as consultative, facilitating teamwork, and in particular locating some inservice training activities in the remote areas. Overall he considered that I had been fairly successful during my time there, making no reference to sustainable change.

However, for many of the placements within the study, there is evidence that they affected both colleagues' accounts and the way that resources are distributed in the institution and wider community. I want to look briefly at the nature of these effects.

Of the two case study placements which had finished at the time of data generation, one had resulted in stronger accounts by some NGO colleagues of contradictions in the network (case study IV) and the need to address them systematically. The other resulted in a newly-equipped laboratory, with several teachers having some experience of science, and a relatively marginalised woman having become a government teacher (case study II). Elin gave a strong account of how she had benefited from Phil's knowledge and the way they had worked together.

The difference in these effects represents something of the range of possibilities from volunteer placements. For the volunteer agency, one was disappointing, the other encouraging (a second science teacher went to SMUK Aru after Phil). But the placements also indicate the range of effects on resources, from the greater capacity within a network of NGOs to a strengthening of gender equality and practical science education in a high school.

At Baik Hati too, the most marginalised female teacher, Ira, after much encouragement from the volunteer, applied for government teacher status: 'when the testing came up, he came every day and told me to apply. Eventually I did; he took me round and helped me get all the forms etc. And there it was: I passed and was placed in SMP1' [S8:44].

Ibu Lin told me how 'Rob left when we were just about to start [working for the tourist office], and we weren't brave enough to carry on without him'. In says that she is still missing his effect, three years later. ‘Where can I go to now that he's gone? I feel that when he was here, there was a liveliness about English teaching. When he left, people used to come to me for help; I would say ‘Why me?’ they would say, “Because you were close to Rob.....”[Ibu Lin, March 1998, S7:48].

For Ibu Lin and those who look to her for advice, an account of her closeness to Rob is a useful public explanation of her abilities and knowledge. The gap that Rob left behind is still observable in the way these colleagues talk about him, relating to a new perception of themselves and their work, but the gap does not appear to be reflected in their positioning. Since Rob’s departure, Ibu Lin had been promoted:

> 'I have become a key teacher, and am a candidate instructor for… in-service training: waiting for funds in the crisis, to go to Mataram for a course, perhaps be selected to go on to train in Jakarta’ [Ibu Lin, March 1998, S7:28].

This apparent contradiction between the absence of a valued colleague in a context of continuing change appears in other colleagues' accounts. Ibu Irma in Maumere, a science teacher who had worked with Maxine two years' earlier, told me,

> 'It was quiet when she left but we keep going… still many teachers come to me individually at home, or in school, and ask me.. Maxine 'came to learn', said so to me, and so I felt sure, didn't doubt... She added professionalism: how to learn from nature itself, as a biology teacher… she pushed me to do some research. Now I think I'm going to do research within the classroom' [m7:17-27].

The teachers at Augustine gave an account of how the volunteer assisted in a general transformation in the morale and status of the school; how since the new head arrived, it had been seen as the best school in the area: they 'don't accept students who are not up to it… some students are afraid to come here, and numbers are lower, but that's not seen as a problem. And practical science is seen as a core in that effort. Eventually would like to have a lab for each science' [S3:31]. The laboratory is organised, still being used by staff who have a good knowledge of practical science. 'Can these changes be sustained? In chemistry and biology, yes: the use of the lab is prioritised… But we really miss Joanne already' [S3:24]. Again, this is an account of absence, while resources are redistributed in continuing development.

At the hospital in Ende, few social resources were redistributed. Some posters were added to the walls, with information about procedures. In the middle school in Waikabubak, the main redistribution of resources was in the main colleague's practical knowledge of English teaching, and in the effect that the volunteer's teaching had on students, 'the kind of student activity which can really grab the students imagination and get them seriously interested in English' [S4:42].

In the hospital in Waikabubak, there was apparently little redistribution of resources; some colleagues in the hospital had developed stronger accounts of mismanagement. However, in the some of the health clinics the status of the kaders was raised through training workshops and marked by the distribution of t-shirts, and at several levels in the system there was a reinforcement of nutritional knowledge and its importance. At the technical school in Bajawa, the main change was in material resources, with a reequipped workshop, and in the commitment of a colleague to different way, based on practical knowledge which has been reinforced through two years' experience.

The attitude of volunteers features strongly in many of the accounts of colleagues. A science teacher in West Flores told me three years after the volunteer had left: 'this is hard to measure, but having him around helped us to understand Westerners more, made us more open to them. We only knew tourists before that. And didn't understand their culture' [WF2:77]. An indication of his meaning came from the headteacher, who described the way the volunteer would go and sit under a tree to calm down when he got angry. In terms of learning about science education, a teacher in a second school told me how the volunteer made him 'feel independent: not guided like a child, his way would be to ask if he understood what this equipment was for… and help out where necessary… his motto was, don't worry if you get it wrong' [WF6: 69-75]. In both schools the science laboratories appeared to have been used regularly.

Some colleagues' accounts described the process of learning in the placement. Jane's boss in the NGO in West Timor reflected on how gradual was the effect. 'World Neighbours and CUSO all want to know what effect they have, of course. But it's silly to think that in two years all the staff will be skilled. It just doesn't happen like that. It's important to reduce expectations. But over the time of three volunteers, since 1989, there has been a change. Some staff could develop. They choose themselves: the volunteer is only as good as the people who take on the ideas. They may be highly skilled but…'. A valuable role of the outsider was to 'refresh, widen the scope of our vision,

see wider. Think about the program as a whole, and what should go into it… we always welcome critical evaluation; from the volunteer, we ask that when they leave. "These things are still needing attention etc". And if someone comes to study us, we say please don't just praise us' [T6:72-82].

In the bamboo NGO in Maumere, Yuli reflected on the learning process that she and Alicia's predecessor Sarah had engaged in:

> 'She felt like one of the staff here. She didn't think of herself like a Westerner… when I first knew her… I thought an angry person... it will be very difficult to work with her... but after I knew her, we experienced no problems… before long we were close… *Andy*: And did you often quarrel, often oppose her? *Yuli*: Yeah. Often as well, yes. (laughing)… about work… she cried because of me, I cried because of her' [M3:85-109].

English teachers in Alor gave an account of their negotiated flexibility in methodology and content, with a volunteer who 'uses a system slightly different to the one we usually use: communicative system. Whereas we base our teaching usually on knowledge according to the book. One is good for teaching conversation skills, the other for doing problems (in exams). Finding a way to use both together is a good idea' [EF3:33-34]… 'There is a principle to remember, of making it appropriate to the students here in Alor. No point in teaching about supermarkets, there are none. So it's a case of imagination and appropriate changes' [EF3:53-56]

Finally, an English teacher in West Flores told me how his volunteer colleague had been a positive influence, planning thoroughly, training local teachers: 'On her initiative we started teachers groups, and she would always have us prepare for the week ahead, and keep us on our toes with reminders etc. We would always plan lessons together, and we were a "compact team" in the classroom', team teaching and observing each other. A small difficulty was the way she would immediately correct him in front of the students if he made a mistake. She was a good teacher, he said, but not an educator; by which he meant she did not feel it her role to consider the wider moral education of the students [Wf10:33-37].

These accounts by colleagues retain a strong sense of the process of engaging with the volunteer, in some cases several years after the placement is finished. They refer to details of practice; to attitudes and mottos; to materials and positioning; to the use of time and space. By and large they appear positive about the experience of the placement. Set alongside the distribution of social resources, many accounts suggest that the effects of the placement are not restricted to the development of particular skills, but rather indicate new understanding of the relative strengths and weaknesses of volunteers compared to their colleagues.

Not all local accounts of volunteer placements are so positive. The accounts of local people who meet volunteers living in their neighbourhood can become woven into contradictory local discourses. Pink (1998) describes the account of a young woman in a community in Guinea Bissau which had become familiar with successive volunteers and other expatriate workers, and had a child by the European man with whom she had been living. 'Once her "husband" had left, two newly arrived development workers, a couple, had taken care of her and her child, giving her work and showering gifts on her daughter…(p.13). The action of the departed "husband" appeared transgressive to other Europeans, constructing the woman as a victim deserving their particular

attention, which 'served to confirm local notions that a "white" child will bring further fortune; white people will help a "white" child' (ibid. p.13). Younger girls in the community joked with volunteers about wanting their babies, learning to see friendship with other Europeans as access to their 'social networks and economic resources - the stuff of personal relations and individual agendas' (ibid. p.14).

An understanding of the end of placements in Indonesia would not be complete without consideration of these wider accounts. If Indonesian women or men saw such possibilities, it was in terms of marriage. I discussed the moral discourse governing sexual relationships when considering learning from other's transgression; it is perhaps not coincidental that several of the volunteers I have discussed, both men and women, married Indonesian partners. Most of these couples now live in the UK but regularly visit family in Indonesia.

### *Volunteers' accounts of development: projects, solidarity, and difference*

I have suggested that after the end of the placement, volunteers are left only with accounts. This is not the whole picture, but contact with colleagues and friends in remote parts of Indonesia is difficult. Other than those who get married to Indonesians, volunteers return to Indonesia only for brief trips, if at all; the accounts formed through the placement are its most substantial outcome for them. These accounts are not fixed in form or content, but are often rich, potentially powerful interpretive resources with which to address critical issues.

For example, a common subject of volunteers' accounts is the nature and local meaning of development, particularly in reference to themselves. Whatever the volunteer has understood about poverty and development prior to reaching the placement, what he or she finds on arrival is a living community. The discourse of development is far from central to the way most people live their lives. People love, hate, have families, start businesses, work as English teachers, keep a cow, welcome strangers. We have seen how Pete rejected the association of his work with the notion of development. Other volunteers too form accounts to connect this particular living place with their understandings of development, having stayed long enough to learn the complexity of local classifications.

Rob had worked hard to understand what development was in the context of his life in Sumba, and in particular the relationship between what he thought of as work, and social life. A colleague said of him that 'he didn't really mix or become a part of the local community… but he mixed very well with teachers; he used to come to my house, I would go to his, he would receive me very well' (Pak Gabriel, interview, 18 March, 1998). Rob eventually became aware of a contradiction between his concept of the job and the practices he was engaged in:

> 'It took me such a long time to realise that sitting around and chatting was part of our job. … A lot of things were work orientated, because they were about just being in the community. Whereas they weren't exactly work things, if you see what I mean. Gabriel said it, and I think I felt that .. in some ways I didn't really fit into the community, I was always going to be an outsider' [RB, Feb 1999, S14:268].

Rob socialised a lot on a one-to-one basis. ‘Virtually every evening, I had a routine, I would listen the radio and write my letters and then after that finished, for a long time I always went to either

Pak Yohanes, or Pak Agus, someone's house and chatted away' (interview, RB, 10th Feb 1999). But he refused to be positioned exclusively with one or other group of people by spending time with them: '… I didn't really want to be in one of the identities, "The Catholic Group", or the ... because it meant that I couldn't be with the other groups' [S14: 268 ]

An important opportunity to develop an ongoing dialogue arose through Rob's accommodation: he had a room in the house of a deputy headteacher throughout the placement:

> 'Every day I eat with my family, I've now gained the status of eldest son, despite being nothing of the sort. There the jokes are also routine, but increasingly broader subjects of national and international importance are opening up to us. Most taboo subjects are raised, for which I'm grateful since not only does it relieve my unstimulated brain, but it also reminds me that Indonesians are not always as naïve and accepting as they appear. It also raises the issue, increasingly felt with my friends, of how these intelligent, thinking, aware people cope with the constraints of this sort of society. But of course they do, they love their country, and see the value of some of its systems [Rob, placement report, July 1993, S13:20]

Reflecting on this after the placement, Rob sees this relationship as very much part of the development process that he was involved in:

> 'My major impact.. was probably through him. Major impact is probably the wrong way of putting it. Far more... the interaction between me and him had a greater outcome than any other interaction I had. Because I lived with the guy for five years, and I ate two meals a day with him, and we sat and talked about things …. and he was an old guard chap. I think he was honest, I mean the amount of times I was disappointed by people but I really think he was an honest guy, good straightforward teacher and had got good ideas about education….
>
> 'The longer I spent there the more I realised. People always said to us… people won't speak to you overtly initially. That's true, but I don't think it's ever overtly obvious… And then as it started coming out… I think Xainano Gusma [leader of the East Timorese resistance] was captured. I think that was the first thing. And Pak Tate used to come in the morning, outside my room, and listen to Radio Hilversum [Dutch world service]. I could hear him wandering round listening to it. And I'd listen to the BBC and then we'd discuss what the two of them said. And we'd have the discussions outside. We would never have those discussions with his wife over the meal. But it was the kind of thing where confidence built. And conversations widened' [S14:70].

This was an important relationship for this volunteer and his host, in which trust grew until it was possible to talk quite freely about once-sensitive subjects. It is an example of how institutionalised communication, in this case daily talk over meals and in the early mornings, slowly builds a way around the barriers of preconception. The volunteer's account describes how he understood this as a development activity in just the same way as his more formal work with teachers. The volunteer summarised his account of development in another way as well: 'It's not about changing people's attitudes, or changing them for anything in particular. It's about being involved in the process of change, or being a catalyst. Or just being a sounding board. I suppose a catalyst. But again this sounds too deterministic' [Rob, S14:305]. For this volunteer, development is associated with the building of solidarity: 'that is development work: relationship-building, strengthening, reassuring…' (comment on part of the case study of my placement)

Graham's account of development in relation to his workplace in the hospital laboratory was entirely different. He had elaborated his professional account of why his placement was a non-starter, and it revolved around the unreadiness of his colleagues for the technical business of development. He had worked out a personal theory about the rationality of Western development and the irrationality of Asian culture:

> 'I believe people in my culture to be essentially rational, logical thinkers always considering consequences, ie the future and people in Indonesia and probably most of Asia, to be more intuitive, caring and acting from the heart, or spur of the moment. Therefore scientific thought comes much more naturally to me than to most of the people I work with, which has been a big stumbling block to plans to improve health and safety, maintenance and quality control, all future-oriented concepts. So here I've had to think first about attitude development before physical changes. My personal life has helped feed my theories on this topic' [final report, April 1998, EL19:12].
>
> 'They live in a different world; it is inconceivable that they would really learn the things that would be necessary to upgrade the lab to be able to deal with bacteriology, to move the hospital from D to C on the scale. But then to what extent is that appropriate anyway? Bacteriological infections are not very important here, its mostly upper respiratory tract infections' ... [EL7:104]

Culture became an explanation for all the contradictions that the volunteer experienced. However, he had learnt to avoid discussions with other volunteers, so as not to deepen this classification: 'Whenever I find myself discussing issues I find myself plunging into the age-old expat thing of whinging about the character of the people here… I feel worse if I've been on a whinge… [for instance] Phil… would like me to travel with him... He wants me to do that but I don't want to go with him because I know, that it will be just, Westerners versus the rest' [EL7:373-374]. Graham had come to the conclusion that he should follow the lead of his colleagues:

> 'I've learnt a lot about the way people do things. The things people are prepared to do, things people are prepared not to do, the attitude of 'biar saja' - let it go - everything's.. nobody's got any complaints. There's nothing terribly pressing… There's no thought of development. Development in a laboratory sense, is just improving things… Here they're not interested in development in the laboratory. If everything pipes along just as it is, that's fine. Some doctors would like there to be other tests, as well, which would be helpful. But then I think, well why don't you instigate it then?...'[EL7:331-333].

Instead of thinking about the lack of development, Graham concentrated on getting to know friends, and through them more about the culture. Indonesian friends became highly significant for him towards the end of his placement:

> 'I just go to a family's house for the evening, and just become part of their... that makes me feel really good. You know. Just getting on with life. It's very important' [EL7:374]. 'I now have a new set of friends who do not treat me as a piece of entertainment or a status symbol from England but rather as an equal sharing the same interests… as well as listening to any concerns I have about life here. We also share our views on cultural differences and similarities. My two adoptive families have enabled me to continue my photo record as well as some tape recording of ordinary (and occasionally unusual) life here and these families have made my social life much more complete, although I am still able to find my much needed solitude' [EL19:11].

Graham felt that his role was educational:

> 'My talking with people has an effect. The young people will remember me, definitely, when they grow up. 'He believed this, he believed that'. And there's something to be said for that…'

He too had become more educated:

> 'I've been welcomed into a lot of things, weddings, funerals, adat-type ceremonies… We had to walk out right into the mountains; everyone was in traditional dress… the killing of the pig, and the cooking of it, then everybody eats this, it's a kind of thanksgiving to the land. And a hope that the future will bring fertility. It's a bit of a fertility rite, its done every year' [EL7:313 ]

The difference between these two volunteers' accounts could be seen to lie in the freedom to define development with respect to the specific context. Rob's account is of learning what development meant, through his interactions with people. Graham's account takes the meaning of development as given, and describes the way he came to position people in relation to this meaning. His account of social life is of negotiation and mutual learning, whilst the account of work is of absolute cultural difference. The same sense is evident in the words of another volunteer in Flores: 'Currently in the seminary I work in, they're organising a school laboratory that, in the end, should become a village library. This is more due to some motivated people that happen to be on the right place, than *real planned 'development'*.' [WF13:36, my italics].

Both Rob and Graham's accounts have grown alongside a complex of relationships, expectations, worldviews and decisions on a day to day basis, and they may continue to change as the experience of the placement becomes more distant.

### *Volunteers after the end of the placement*

For many volunteers, the end of the placement is a difficult discontinuity to come to terms with, emotionally, mentally and physically. In terms of the learning framework developed here, processes within a community of practice cannot be carried in a person's mind; knowledge makes little sense decontextualised from the relationships, materials and physical context of the community. The negotiated order constructed between volunteers and their colleagues is destroyed, with far-reaching consequences for the volunteer's account of their experience.

The returned volunteer has a need to tell reincorporation stories, which bring their experience back into this world. That is done through photo albums, through talks, in all of which stories of the placement are constructed. In this 'new' context, the placement is framed in isolated peculiarity; going through photographs heightens a sense of strangeness, labelled 'reverse culture shock' by some. But the accounts which are told are far more likely to reinforce the concept of the volunteer in development, than to explain the mutual learning that has been going on. The dominant discourse of development is one of few categories of shared reference with contemporaries: the stories of development emerge basically unscathed. Little information moves between returned volunteers and their peers at home about the day-to-day practice in which they were engaged, about relationships with colleagues, or learning processes.

### *Reflections on my own account of volunteering*

Personal reflections on the case study [Appendix I] that I wrote of my own placement will stand as an example of the perspectives which are difficult to recount. The case study is an account that I had formed four years or so after leaving the placement. It is an account, not the account, because it was the result of reflection using memory assisted by the diary, letters, tapes that I wrote and recorded at the time, and so probably more detailed and polyvocal than any account I could have given in the kind of interviews to which I subjected others. Nevertheless, the text of this case study is an opportunity to reflect on what I am left with, now that the placement is some years in the past: the areas of life on which I choose to be silent; the way in which I present myself as a volunteer, my colleagues, our relationships and activities.

The account retains a strong sense of my expectation before getting to the placement, and my prior commitment to the Irianese people resulting from my reading of various background material. Arriving in Irian was already a climax for me, a place of engagement with injustice. But I am left with a continuing sense of bewilderment at how to make sense of my role in view of that commitment, a moral dilemma as an outsider promoting Westernising change. Nevertheless, the case study fashions a reasonably coherent story out of that bewilderment, just as I did as I went along.

I tell a story of my changing relationship with the head of the Catholic education organisation, who began as a fixed point for my self-reference, helping me to negotiate my introduction to the locality; of whom I became increasingly critical, and who at the end I was, indeed am very uncertain about, with reports of his corrupt practice involving funding I had obtained for a science centre. I am left with a sense of ambiguity, a relationship unresolved, broken by distance - indeed this applies to many relationships that I formed.

There are many silences in the account of my first year. About language for instance: I understand now that I saw myself as doing well with Indonesian, and avoided conscious reflection on the difficulties with interpretation. I overlooked a lot of strangeness; the flag-raising and nationalism at 7.30am on Monday, the prayers, the discipline methods, the incredibly long hours that some teachers worked, holding down jobs in several schools. I had no framework from which to judge apart from comparisons with UK, and except in my own teaching, I instinctively stifled that as an inappropriate comparison. The account of my home school dwells on my work in a context that I didn't understand. I am left with a sense of my arrogance in not taking the rest of the school seriously as a place of learning.

Again and again my account focuses on myself as actor, omitting to tell the stories of others. After a plane crash in which a WWF manager was tragically killed, I am silent about mourning with Irianese and Indonesian WWF workers; I represent the weeks that followed as a period of generous caring for them on my part, whereas it was the start of much more real engagement with Irianese people that I counted as close friends through the rest of my time. I see another silence in my account now: the story of my personal prejudices, against the Javanese for example, and the significance of ethnicity in my friendships, which I only hinted at.

The geography of Irian has a presence through my account, mapping out different levels of my engagement. The interior, the inland areas, are portrayed in my account as a place apart, the exotic within the exotic, a place of more intense involvement; the coast is more peripheral, a first base. This association of place and positioning has stayed with me.

My account builds momentum, mapping out my increasing network, and the quickening pace of events. I tell the story of 'a busy final year', and I retain a satisfaction at this greater involvement, feeling needed and stretched, the way more intense activity justified my presence. But the final period of the placement is increasingly contradictory: there was a 'moment of high hopes', but set within a 'tightening web'. At the time, and now, leaving feels like a release, a necessary resolution. Choosing to leave on my birthday was like placing a memorial stone on the end of the placement, which has served a powerful purpose since so much remained unresolved and unfinished.

Newly returned to the UK I was a misfit, finding it difficult to give accounts which 'did justice' to the experience, feeling the rawness of so many relationships broken apart. Descriptions of difference strengthened others' stereotypes, and so made sense, whilst my descriptions of similarities were hard to believe, and hard to tell.

### *Sharing accounts with other volunteers*

Attending a volunteer local group has been valuable. From VSO's point of view, these function as supporters clubs: 'Many volunteers join their Local Group when they return from their work overseas. Everyone can support VSO and its partners through the VSO Local Group network. Everybody has skills they can share with VSO from setting up stalls to giving interviews to local media…'. However, other processes are involved. In Manchester, between ten and fifteen people, some prospective but mostly returned volunteers meet monthly for discussions on issues like AIDS/HIV in Southern Africa, and for talks from newly returned volunteers about their experience. At one meeting, participants began to discuss reasons for coming together. A doctor who had been a volunteer in Tanzania ten years earlier explained: ‘Why did I get involved? It was an important part of my life, but it seemed completely separate. There was no connection between my life in Manchester and my life living abroad. It was difficult to talk to people about it. I wanted to get this experience back into my life, and that is why I got involved.’ This process describes something of the value of this PhD to me. Other people create other spaces for this transition, to take on board lessons which cannot be learnt immediately.

There is a reticence within this group to break ranks with the organisation's line. At a meeting in March 2000, I invited the group to discuss in small groups some statements about volunteering, interested to learn more about how they thought about their volunteering experience after returning to the UK. Generally, they perceived no major problems with VSO level volunteering, though they were scornful of other volunteer schemes, like 'workcamps of unskilled people going to build hospitals in Tanzania'. The most problematic issue for participants was the way in which 'some host organisations…want the volunteer primarily for the status that a Westerner brings … or as access to funding', without having a clear role for the volunteer. They considered that the agency had some responsibility here. They rejected the idea that 'some volunteers find it difficult to

communicate about their experience'. When people show no interest, members interpreted this as general apathy towards developing world issues, or that they don't share any similar experience, so that it's hard to make connections.

Almost all groups were uncomfortable about the statement, 'some volunteers form racist explanations for people's behaviour'. This was, they said, easy to recognise in expatriates, but only one person said that sometimes you could hear frustrated volunteers talking among themselves, making comments and generalisations, for instance about the laziness of their colleagues. Yet the uneasiness I feel in meeting an all-white group of returned volunteers to talk about development in a strongly multicultural city is shared only by one or two others.

### *Opportunities to speak*

In terms of the learning framework, a problem for returned volunteers is that the accounts they give cannot be validated by reference to the distributions of social resources against which they were formed. This explains some of the defensiveness of returned volunteers, open as they are to others' scepticism about the value of their placement; and the tendency to form accounts in terms of development discourse, which other people recognise and can use as an evaluative framework.

Returned volunteers do find other spaces to speak about their experience. Many volunteers find it important to associate with those who have worked in the same country; they maintain strong networks of volunteer friends. The volunteer who had worked in Sierra Leone (Chapter One) spoke for many here:

> 'I've formed some of the strongest friendships, which have lasted a long time, with VSO volunteers… with three in particular.. we don't see each other very often but there is a very deep and long-lasting friendship between the four of us when we do meet up… we can talk about things without having to explain, so we can talk in a way that we can't talk with other people…
>
> I hardly ever talk about Sierra Leone with anyone else; except my Sierra Leonian friends in London… because I have been to Sierra Leone and lived there for a long time… also because I speak the local language, instantly you just get on with people. Cos they don't have to explain about Sierra Leone… it's a white person that they can relate to… many of them have had quite negative experiences in this country, many of them have never been invited into a white person's home… someone who cares about Sierra Leone as well' [sierral:76-78].

I wondered whether returned volunteers in the UK could use the case studies of Chapter Five as a source of critical reflection on their own experiences. An agriculturalist who had recently returned from Malawi, for example, found that a lot of Alicia's experience (case study III) fitted with her own, and was very keen to engage in dialogue about the similarities and differences. She wrote extensively about the social situation; about difficulties that she had experienced in her first institution, and the importance of various individuals in opening up doors for her, etc. She was particularly enthusiastic to note an experience that matched Alicia's with bamboo, especially in view of Alicia's simile:

> 'I can relate very well to Alicia's statement that starts: "and so bamboo entered my life...." all I would have to do is to swap the word "bamboo" for "moringa" (one of the tree crops that we were working intensively with) or "vegetables" (the other main thrust of the

> project). Also as stated by Alicia, for me the Moringa story is like a religion!!!… It "converted" me and, in my opinion, I became (and still am!) a sort of Moringa disciple, using every opportunity to promote its many uses, values and benefits. I had known very little about the tree until I went to a two-day workshop on it with my counterpart… we discovered that it was every bit as good and so we set off on the Moringa promotion trail! It fitted into our project aims incredibly well and we obtained funding for inclusion of a number of Moringa focused activities… Moringa inspires a need to "spread the word" much as I imagine some people feel about religion'.

This volunteer found it 'very interesting' to email her account of volunteering experience to me, at the level of detail suggested by comparison with Alicia's case study. That she analysed mistakes and misconceptions along with successes like Moringa suggests the need for more opportunities for dialogue.

### *Dialogue through volunteering*

The end of the placement is an enormous discontinuity, and when the placement is over, the accounts of volunteers and colleagues tend to be transformed by assimilation into existing frameworks of interpretation. This echoes on a local scale the assimilation of European travellers' tales into the dominant discourses of the period, through their published travel writing; whilst indigenous writing, sometimes of an epic scale, lay unpublished and forgotten (Pratt, 1992). Solidarity becomes disembodied in the process of transition back home. Alternative accounts, whatever the reality they relate to, are inevitably ignored, disbelieved, or discredited from within the dominant paradigm (Carmen, 1992). The development discourse distorts the outcomes of volunteering by channelling participants' accounts within narrow limits, positioning people in the role of donors and receivers of assistance.

Part of the power of development discourse comes from the high moral purpose of development; the laudable, liberal concern with equity and justice, which seems to make local heroes and heroines out of volunteers. Yet this is not the whole story. As contact, the placement produces uneven knowledge, which resists assimilation into the development account. The memories that volunteers and their local colleagues have of the details of their engagement persist, and with them the possibility that this experience can illuminate the local working of global structures, including structures of development, within which the placement is located. As the feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith argues,

> 'The relation of the local and particular to generalized social relations is not a conceptual or methodological issue, it is a property of social organisation. The particular 'case' is not particular in the aspects that are of concern to the inquirer…. it presents itself to us rather as a point of entry, the locus of an experiencing subject or subjects, into a larger social and economic process. The problematic of the everyday world arises precisely at the juncture of particular experience, with generalizing and abstracted forms of social relations organizing a division of labor in society at large' (Smith 1988, p.157).

Smith's 'division of labor' translates into that wider set of classifications which encompass the volunteer and which structure processes in the placement. Volunteer placements offer points of entry into this structural process. The learning framework creates a space for development practitioners to reflect on the nature of their engagement with colleagues, with the concept of

classification serving to restrict the range of their assumptions about their own position and knowledge.

The learning process suggests that the assimilation of knowledge about volunteering into the development discourse can be resisted, even when volunteers are back in the UK. Bakhtin describes the hold that a dominant discourse has on what can be said, but also the hope that meaning can be made beyond that discourse:

> 'I can mean what I say, but only indirectly, at second remove, in words I take and give back to the community according to the protocols it establishes. My voice can mean, but only with others; at times in chorus, but at the best of times in dialogue' (in Holquist, 1981 p.165).

Is it possible, for example, that returned volunteers and others so minded can recognise and take part in a learning process here in this country, involving the many ethnic groups which form the United Kingdom, which moves from contradiction to transgression to negotiation, over and against the rhetoric of racism and liberalism? Such a process must involve more than accounts; in terms of the distribution of social resources, it should lead to stronger networks, to shared activities and material exchange. As the results of such a process act on the institutions of development, including volunteer agencies, one would hope for material differences: a more representative volunteer group, learning to speak a more polyvocal discourse.

In the final chapter I move the field of attention beyond volunteering to other modes of development activity and thought. In the light of the framework of learning with which I have interpreted processes in the volunteer placement, I examine competing claims from other perspectives about development interventions like volunteering, as well as the significance of this framework for other approaches to development.

## Chapter Eight: The Learning of the Outsider and Discourses of Development

This thesis is not primarily an evaluation of volunteering, but an exploration of learning in a context of difference. This chapter begins with an examination of the way volunteer placements are positioned in relation to various schools of development practice. However, given the framework of learning which has been developed in relation to volunteer placements, this positioning of volunteering offers a critique of those development practices, which tend to neglect the significance of learning processes involving outsiders. The second part of this chapter focuses on the issue of learning in development.

### A brief review of the thesis

Before engaging with this argument, I will briefly review the stages of the thesis so far, and reflect equally briefly on the analytical journey that I have travelled. Provoked by the question as to the nature of the outcomes of volunteer placements, the existence of this ostensibly strange practice was explored in Chapter One with respect to its history, the processes that sustain it within the UK and the context of placements in Indonesia. In Chapter Two, volunteering was seen to exist as a managed social world (Clarke, 1997), dependent on the judicious investment of resources and the maintenance of boundaries both in the UK and Indonesia. It was seen to be legitimated in two different ways: for colleagues within the host institution, the adaptation and participation of the volunteer appears most significant, whilst for the volunteer agency, it is the change that results from the placement which is crucial. This conceptualisation explained the initial differences in the placement, but also highlighted the process of learning between volunteer and colleagues, which it could not explain.

The aim in Chapter Three was to develop a framework for exploring learning in this context of difference. Development projects and anthropological writing indicated the difficulties of learning in this context. For example, the notion of culture appeared problematic, too often preventing learning and becoming an excuse for inequality and injustice. In Chapter Four, the adoption of a contact perspective (Pratt 1992) foregrounded interaction between participants in placements, and fieldwork was described and analysed as a process of learning from that perspective. Results of Qsort analysis suggested the distribution of social resources as a central process in interaction, to set alongside participants' accounts.

The case studies in Chapter Five were written as explorations of the processes involved in volunteer placements. Distributions of social resources were described together with participants' accounts in an analysis of the way these placements developed. In Chapter Six, reflection on case studies indicates that significant learning goes on in relation to boundaries of different kinds; participants' learning involves the awareness of contradiction, transgression and negotiation, comprising the mutual influence of participants' accounts and the distribution of resources. The notion of classification, well developed in feminist thinking, proved powerful in a context where gender is one of many justifications for differences in power. In Chapter Seven, the development of a wider range of placements was seen to make sense in terms of these learning processes. The

outcomes of volunteer placements were interpreted in terms of participants' accounts and social resource distributions.

### *Reflections on the analytical process after fieldwork*

Having began with a general question about the learning which results from volunteer placements, it was only gradually that I became aware of my more basic question concerned the role of learning processes within those placements. On returning from Indonesia in 1998 I concentrated on cross-case analysis for five months, becoming increasingly frustrated at losing the richness of the data I knew I had generated. Writing case studies of individual placements about which I had most information liberated me from the need for generalisations between very different contexts.

I continued to seek the involvement of participants, not to get closer to the truth, but to reach previously unconsidered perspectives. I sent draft case studies back to Indonesian staff and volunteers, eliciting responses both through interviews with volunteers back in the UK and remotely through post and email, in a process resembling Stronach and Maclure's (1997) 'report and respond' technique. In this way, the cases have created a space created for discussion about the mixed and contradictory messages of the placement. It is an ethnographic space, validated by what has been invested by myself and others in the process of description, which is not a little energy, critical thought and emotion. I also continued to use the Q sort interview to generate data on other placements, both in person and through the post.

The research process has attempted to get close to placement processes through phenomenological reflection, elements of ethnographic description, comparison between my own and others' experience, and ongoing negotiation. There have been distinct cycles within this analytical process. The engagement of others at long distance has changed with the nature of their responses. At certain points I have refrained from further contact, unsure of my questions or direction. It is necessary to strive for critical distance and to engage in participative reflection, and to let the emerging contradictions speak for themselves. The result is a study which is subjectively informed, but structured and strengthened by many people's understandings.

## Implications of the framework

The learning framework suggests two questions which are explored in turn in this chapter: firstly, what is the position of volunteering within the field of development? Secondly, what are the implications for other modes of development activity? The relationship between classification and learning has significance not only in the case of the volunteer placement, but to development processes more generally, and in particular, to understanding the role of individual outsiders in development.

In the previous chapter, participants in volunteer placements were seen to hold conflicting perspectives on development and on the position of their work together with respect to development issues, reflecting more general conflict in development thinking in both South and North. The critiques of volunteering considered here come from two opposing perspectives. From

one, volunteering appears to be a neo-colonialist intervention; from the other, it is an irrelevance in view of the scale of the problem of poverty.

Many development theorists in North and South (e.g. Carmen, 1996; Escobar, 1995; Sachs, 1992) see most Northern involvement in Southern institutions as an insidious influence on processes that should be driven by the people themselves. Others, including Northern governments and development agencies, make a strong moral argument for Northern involvement in alleviating the poverty of millions of marginalised people, with current debate about what constitutes appropriate involvement focused on concepts of 'participation' and 'capacity building' (DfID, 2001; UNDP, 2000).

However, these accounts appear to overlook the learning process involved when volunteers and colleagues participate together in local communities. In what follows I will argue that development processes depend fundamentally on the learning interaction between people in a context of classification, together with people's existing resources, skills and state of vulnerability; and that therefore the best examples of volunteer placements exemplify 'a type of (development) practice that is not threatened by otherness and difference' (Escobar 1991, p.678).

## The location of volunteering with respect to development

Volunteering is vulnerable to two opposing charges: on the one hand, that it is neo-colonialist and promotes the continuation of dependence, in other words that it is too interventionist; and on the other, that it is irrelevant to the mainstream development effort to reduce poverty. I want to challenge these perspectives by relating them to the processes of volunteering that are revealed through the learning focus constructed in earlier chapters. This defence of volunteering becomes a critique of development practice more generally.

### *Volunteering is essentially a neo-colonialist intervention*

The charge of neo-colonialism is that volunteering promotes dependence and embeds in a new generation the notion that 'poor people are not able'; that volunteering is a typical example of a development process ordered according to Northern assumptions and approaches. The case against such intervention has been comprehensively developed by Carmen (1996), who notes that although interventions are now widely seen to require and benefit from people's participation at various stages (Chambers, 1997), they remain external interventions to which people are invited to respond. Participation therefore corresponds to a notion that 'people can be put - first, last, wherever - or simply forgotten at will' (Carmen 1996, p.81); Carmen's word 'participulation' signifies the manipulation through such participation. In contrast, 'from the moment we enter the space of people in full ownership and control of the satisfaction of their fundamental needs - affection, protection and freedom… - we enter the domain of power, where the very concept of participation… becomes redundant' (ibid. p.52). Carmen cites Pradervand (1990) who describes the vibrancy of thousands of peasant groups all over Africa (p.66), and has championed the concept of 'entrepreneurial literacy' through month-long participatory workshops (Carmen and Sobrado, 2000), in which hundreds and sometimes thousands of people at a time learn to organise themselves in a production process. This form of empowerment, created by the Brazilian Clodomir

Santos de Morais and replicated in many places in Latin America and Africa, has proved effective in promoting people's self-confidence and economic development. These developments exemplify 'autonomous development' (Carmen, 1996) against which processes such as volunteer placements are seen to be inauthentic and a continuation of relationships of dependency.

How far is this a justified critique? Significantly, Carmen's account of 'participulation' is difficult to recognise within volunteer placements, where for the most part the key issue is not the participation of the people, but of the volunteer in an already existing institution. Few accounts by either volunteers or colleagues embody the belief that 'people are not able'. Instead, their accounts arise out of and contribute to a learning process involving many participants in a context of classification which includes the recognition of contradiction, mistakes, misunderstood intentions and negotiation.

Moreover, a focus on learning processes invites more detailed consideration of the change agent role in volunteering and autonomous development. As we will see in a discussion of empowerment below, autonomous development does involve relative outsiders acting as 'change agents', not inviting people's participation in a project, but helping to create conditions whereby that development can take place.

### *Volunteering is irrelevant in the face of world poverty*

From an opposing point of view, many governments and development agencies consider that they are under a moral obligation to 'combat' poverty as manifested in the vulnerability of the poor and their livelihoods. Widespread vulnerability requires attention to scale, and represents an imperative on development agencies to maximize the impact of the scarce resources which are available for development. From this perspective, development requires a far more comprehensive programme of development than could ever be represented by an individual volunteer placement. As a recent example, agencies and government in the UK have developed a 'sustainable livelihoods' framework, generated from Chambers' (1992) holistic focus on livelihoods, and taken to mean those 'capabilities, assets… and activities required for a means of living' (DfID, 1999 section 1.1). This framework is designed to facilitate a comprehensive analysis of the conditions keeping people in poverty, with a view to changing those conditions through systemic reform:

> 'The approach recognises the multiple dimensions of poverty identified in participatory poverty assessments… Its goal is to help poor people to achieve lasting improvements against the indicators of poverty that they themselves identify, and from a baseline they define. Through taking a wider and better informed view of the opportunities, constraints, objectives and interactions that characterise people's lives, it extends the 'menu' for DfID support to livelihood development' (DfID 1999, p.3).

Against such a framework, volunteer placements appear disconnected and insignficant. Yet from the point of view of the individual outsider participating in an institution in the South, and that of their colleagues, the rhetoric of combatting world poverty is overwhelming in its neglect of the contingencies of relationships, activities and events. Most volunteers could make no connection between their placement and the alleviation of poverty. Of fourteen volunteers responding to the Q-sort statement 'This placement is having a real effect in alleviating poverty', eleven disagreed to

some extent, of whom seven disagreed strongly. Other participants in volunteer placements related the concept of poverty to changes in individual lives. Like several colleagues, Frater Yanuarius (case study I) thought of the placement as a 'a kind of first stage... in the way the Pak David teaches, that is certainly going to influence the students who are really disciplined in learning English, so that they can create some work, and that will have the effect of alleviating poverty' [EL2:79-80]. A volunteer English teacher related how 'between 7 and 10 students... have bettered themselves and got good jobs and helped their families through knowing English. One… got funding from an ex-teacher of mine [in the UK], he went away to study tourism at university… got a job in Malaysia, and he's just come back after two years… he was one of the poorest students' [S10:18-21]. The direct effect of volunteering in poverty appears to be obvious only at the level of the individual.

Volunteers often put poverty into a local context, in a way that is difficult to connect to agency rhetoric. 'Getting to Flores I was bowled over by the beauty of the island but best of all were the people. They gave me an incredible welcome, and helped me to settle in, teaching me to fetch water from the well… Sometimes I felt very humble when confronted with these people who shared everything they possessed. There was poverty, suffering, and on occasions, death, but there was also great dignity' [M10:18]. One wonders how to relate such accounts to VSO's Strategic Plan (VSO, 1996), which is framed as a contribution to DfID's 'aim to eliminate poverty through creating sustainable livelihoods for poor people, promoting human development and conserving the environment' (DfID 2001, p.9)[11]. The humility of the volunteer's description is at odds with a development agency discourse which constructs a worldwide moral obligation against a universe of need, and justifies large-scale interventions through that obligation. In the development agency account, there is no sense of participation between the development worker and colleagues, or of processes whereby that participation can come about. The volunteer account begins with engagement between people.

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[11] In Canada, social justice rather than poverty dominates the agency's account: 'CUSO is a Canadian organization which supports alliances for global social justice. We work with people striving for freedom, self-determination, gender and racial equality and cultural survival. We achieve our goals by sharing information, human and material resources, and by promoting policies for developing global sustainability' (www.cuso.org). Likewise, 'Australian Volunteers International is committed to work towards a peaceful and just world… all people should have access to resources to meet their basic human needs; the opportunity to achieve their potential; a right to make decisions about their own development and to participate in the development of their own society'. (www.osb.org.au). The Australian agency repeatedly mention 'reciprocal benefits'.

Some small, independent volunteer organisations do not produce accounts of their relevance to global agendas. The American charity Volunteers in Asia accepts no funding from government or religious organizations. It 'sends between 30 - 40 English teachers on a life-changing adventure… We provide Asian host institutions with needed resources, while at the same time offering volunteers a unique opportunity to become a valued member of an Asian community'. Volunteers contribute a 'participation fee' of just under $1000 (http://www.volasia.org/about).

## Volunteer agencies and Southern institutions: learning, capacity-building and skill-sharing

Volunteer agencies answer the implicit charges of neo-colonialism and irrelevance through their public accounts of general purpose and ways of working. VSO, for example, prove their relevance with a poverty focus discussed in the previous section: an intention to work for or with the disadvantaged to tackle their poverty in line with the pledge by world leaders at the UN Millennium Summit to cut poverty in half by 2015. Against the charge of neo-colonialism, the agency's account sets the 'sharing of skills' within a 'capacity building' framework, and learning is buried in this rhetoric. The following is typical:

> 'VSO has a distinctive capacity to add value to the work of other organisations by placing volunteers to work directly with local colleagues at grass-roots level. VSO will continue to maximise capacity-building and skill-sharing opportunities by aiming to match the most appropriately-skilled volunteer to each placement' (http://www.vso.org).

We have seen how that account was explicitly shared by some volunteers:

> 'The philosophy and goals of the volunteer agency are the reason for which I joined: working with the poorest and most marginalised, sharing skills, and working together for a better world' [Jan, comments on draft of case study IV, Jan 1999, casejo:131].

> 'I think I'm in the skill-sharing business, and if I don't share skills with my colleagues, then I don't do anything' [volunteer, T1:106].

### *Skill sharing*

In the volunteer agency account quoted by Jan above, the sharing of skills links the poorest and most marginalized with the volunteer in pursuit of a better world. This is a partial account of a complex interaction, and some of its unintended effects are potentially damaging. Jan's work was with a group of competing NGOs, rather than with the poorest and most marginalised people; and she was unclear how she could build their capacity. For Jan, the impossibility of sharing skills was explained by a lack of appropriate structures or people:

> 'I guess I never thought enough about what it would take (organisations, structures, people) to be able to USE and SHARE my skills' [Lom2:47]

The term 'skill sharing' is used in an ambiguous and largely untheorised way in the agency literature. The ambiguity is useful. At one level, volunteer placements can be said to benefit host institutions in terms of the specific technical skills which colleagues can learn from volunteers; examples in volunteer placements discussed here include making chemical solutions of particular concentration, operating computer software, repairing motorbikes, and the use of simple drawings in teaching communicative English. However, the learning of such identifiable skills appear limited as outcomes of a volunteer placement; so it is fortunate that on another level, the 'sharing' of skills suggests a relationship of equals, a promise of partnership between people differently located within the world system.

As a description of the processes of learning which earlier chapters have described, the phrase 'sharing skills' appears inadequate. From a learning process perspective, the 'sharing of skills' can only take place through negotiated participation; I have described ways in which negotiation

becomes possible in a classified context. As participants become more centrally part of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991), they learn the skills associated with that practice. To be skilled is to have some practical knowledge together with an account of competence. Practical knowledge means knowledge in context; a working understanding of the meaning of various tools, procedures, routines and roles in a particular situation.

In the first instance then, it is the skilled colleague from whom the volunteer must learn. The existing skills of the volunteer only accrete meaning as the volunteer begins to participate with colleagues in practice. Accounts of many placements suggest that the sharing of skills requires time to achieve a mutual positioning, and negotiation of the necessary resources, such as mutual workspace, tools or time. Sharing skills is far more than a technical process, because learning and passing on skills involves changes in identities.

The person of the volunteer is therefore significant. Many women's ethnographies are different from men's (Bell et al. 1993) because women and men take to the field their experience of different sets of contexts, different orientations to production, power and experience, and are thereby sensitised to issues in different ways. The relationships they form are different, which determines the content and the nature of the information that is accessible to them. In the context of the volunteer placement, this then affects the process through which 'skill-sharing relationships' are formed.

### *Capacity-building*

The first strategic objective of the relatively small volunteer-sending organisation 'Skillshare Africa' is very similar to VSO's: 'To assist the reduction of poverty, improve living conditions and create long-term sustainable livelihoods through support for the development process… (Skillshare Africa 1999, p.3). But they have begun to problematise the role of the volunteer in relation to change in organisations. The concept of 'capacity-building' signals the commitment to changing the status quo in such a way that assistance will not be needed in the future. Whilst 'totally committed to supporting development acitivity which utilises [volunteer] spirit and enthusiasm', Skillshare Africa commit themselves to 'identify the role of development workers more closely within the framework of organisational and skills development as facilitators of change' (ibid. p.13)[12].

VSO too is engaged in working out the role of volunteers within the 'capacity-building' agenda. An in-house VSO paper (Burnett and Martyn Johns, 1999) attempts to tie in modes of volunteers' work to a capacity-building framework. An implicit hierarchy of activities is constructed, moving outwards from those which address core areas of leadership and vision, through support for managing the implementation of policy, on to support for and assistance with service delivery. The paper gives conflicting messages. On the one hand, criticism of technical assistance programmes 'on the grounds that they impose northern standards… does not apply to VSO's work which matches a skilled volunteer with a specific employer, encourages a high degree of adaptation to the

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[12] A footnote explains that 'different organisations use different terms, e.g. volunteers or project workers… in recent years Skillshare Africa has used the word cooperante' (ibid. p.13)

local cultural context and operates within local resource constraints' (p.3). Yet on the other hand, to achieve 'positive change in the lives of disadvantaged people, volunteers will need to assist the organisation to adopt new methods and systems… VSO needs to work with employers who share this agenda, are open to change… It is therefore important that programme staff negotiate a clear mandate for change with prospective employers' (Burnett and Martyn Johns 1999, p.6). The agency cannot have it both ways.

From the perspective of a learning process, the concept of negotiating a mandate for change before the placement begins is problematic. In the volunteer placements considered here, the institutions that volunteers work in are clearly complex social systems; negotiation of change is only possible through a learning process involving many participants once the placement has begun. An exception to this rule was the third case study, where the previous volunteer and NGO manager had spent three years developing the context for change involving the next volunteer; even then the process of change was uneven and at times conflictual. The context of classification, blocking some information while highlighting other, leaves one suspicious of 'clear mandates' for the imposition of Northern standards. For example, consider the meaning of a logical framework to a Sumbanese science teacher:

> 'That kind of thing was really difficult for us and we didn't really know why we were doing that… I think it wasn't successful, filling out that form wasn't it… a kind of form with very long sentence and it's complicated questions. … If you never fill in that kind of questions ... you would think oh what's this, and why this?… That is really difficult. And I remember we were going out the office and thinking, gosh what is this?' [S14:210-221].

It is increasingly presumed that this teacher (along with VSO's many partners) should learn how to fill in this instrument. Of course she can; but the programming of ideas through straitjacketed and formal negotiation appears suspiciously easy, compared to the process of the placement that we have seen unfolding, contingently, conflictingly, in the context of differences that never appear in such frameworks. Moreover, if colleagues fill in the framework poorly, this becomes a measure of their incapacity.

As with the earlier consideration of participation, the rhetoric of capacity building overlooks the major feature of the volunteer placement: the participation of the volunteer in the institution as a critical learning experience, through which opportunities for appropriate change and transformation can be created. Recognition of the requirements for such learning has significance beyond volunteering, for capacity-building is a widely-held aspiration for development activities.

### A learning perspective: notes for volunteer agencies

Important outcomes of the volunteer placement are revealed by a focus on learning processes, with implications for development practice. A volunteer placement is a process of learning in a complex context, through involvement and experience. It is an opportunity for volunteers and colleagues to learn from the experience of living and working with different people about the possibilities are for local change, and the requirements for wider change in the face of the specifics of the local. Through awareness of contradiction, transgression and negotiation, volunteers and their colleagues

learn about the classifications in the context in which they participate, and how they and other participants are themselves positioned in relation to these classifications.

This learning is valuable, and rare. It should not be taken for granted or neglected. It stands as a challenge to development perspectives which make assumptions about the perceptiveness or ignorance of outsiders. Volunteering can contribute to a refreshed understanding of the possibilities of development.

Such a perspective stands against the subsuming of volunteering under the aegis of development. But the discourse of development is insidious. We have seen how, on return, volunteers' accounts are interrogated to determine the impact of the placement, by volunteer agencies, or by the volunteers themselves and their acquaintances. The message that 'people are not able' can emerge as a by-product. Learning processes are written out of volunteer accounts; they are transformed into accounts of change, of workshops run, of estimates of sustainability. These development accounts reinforce the expectations of the next generation of volunteers that they are embarking on a process of assisting development.

In order to strengthen participants' awareness of the nature and role of learning, changes are necessary in the selection, preparation and returning of volunteers. Starting points are available for such change. For example, of the seven general 'dimensions of personality' seen to be desirable in prospective volunteers with VSO, one is a 'commitment to learning - the continuing desire for others to learn and the humility for personal learning and development' (www.vso.org.uk).

Selectors should consider in much greater detail what learning in the context of classification involves, to inform their decisions about individuals. This may lead them to revisit and redefine the other six desirable dimensions: commitment, self assurance, problem solving, ability to work with others, sensitivity, and flexibility.

Those preparing volunteers for their placement could make use of case study material to highlight the centrality and value of learning processes involved in living and working in such a context. Within the placement, agencies should help volunteers to reflect on the detail and richness of learning in their placement, and to understand the construction of solidarity as an outcome in itself; an ambiguous, potentially divisive product of engagement, but one that is important for the growth of understanding between people.

On return, a focus on learning processes should continue, helping volunteers to understand the significance of their experience outside narrow notions of development. For to understand the significance of learning in a classified context is to be better equipped to live and work in multicultural Britain.

Many of these considerations have application beyond volunteering, within other agencies involved in development. But I want to highlight again the value of learning processes in volunteer placements for other development practitioners. Personnel from other agencies could learn from the experience of volunteers in placements related to their geographical or technical area of interest.

## Missed opportunities: learning from volunteering

Autonomous development and strategic intervention perspectives say little about learning in a context of difference. Carmen (1996) recognises the possibility of an 'external organic intellectual' but offers little discussion and few examples of what that role might comprise, or how one might learn to fill such a role. Gramsci (Sassoon, 1987) originally conceived of the organic intellectual as a critical part of the action of civil society against the hegemony of the state, but much work is required to make the external organic intellectual more than a rhetorical figure standing against the hegemony of development discourse. DfID and the development NGOs have correspondingly little to say about the many Westerners who work for them in Southern countries, or the way that they learn. The participation of individuals within organisations, including volunteers, appears to be overlooked in development agency accounts. A classification between volunteers and professional development workers positions the former as development amateurs; very little information about volunteer placements gets into the development literature. This silence may be a failure to recognise an important aspect of process in all these development activities.

For example, the significant role of volunteer placements in a major livestock project in Indonesia is hardly discussed in public information about the project. The DELIVERI (Decentralised Livestock Services in Eastern Indonesia) project is a five-year collaborative project of the Government of Indonesia and the Government of the United Kingdom, due to end in 2001. The project’s purpose, as stated in the logical framework, is to make "livestock-related institutions more responsive to the needs of small-scale farmers, including the resource-poor, through the adoption and replication of more client-oriented and participatory approaches". The project focuses on a classification between a government service and the people it is meant to serve. This kind of classification is not particularly in anyone's interest, but has emerged as a byproduct of the need for bureaucratic national structures to maintain order. It has proved possible to begin to break down this classification through the opportunity to reflect on this situation and a credible process through which transformation can happen. The project adopted PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) methodology, already gaining currency through the activities of several well-known NGOs in Java, as part of the process. The project has led to a shift in the distribution of social resources: the creation of ‘paravets’, skilled farmers in villages who are trained and recognised by the government as basic vetinary practitioners in their local communities, is an example of the construction of subject positions which lie on the old classification between government and farmers.

It is significant that the process through which these changes came about is heavily disguised. Most of the project documentation suggests that training, monitoring and commitment to Total Quality Management were crucial. Volunteers are mentioned as field staff, but only careful searching through the extensive website (www.deliveri.org) reveals any discussion of the role of these placements, with a reference in connection with building relationships and trust between groups, to the way in which 'the continued, dedicated attentions of a single VSO/consultant as opposed to smaller, less regular input of several, helped enormously in the process'.

In fact, this livestock project originated with the placement of a volunteer vet in a government extension service in 1992. The volunteer spent time getting to know farmers, learning the local language as well as Indonesian. In this way, he also learnt about the classification between the government livestock extension service and the people, and positioned himself by transgressing across this classification, making strong links with government officials as well as farmers' groups. Colleagues in the extension service also adapted their practices and began to construct a different account of their position in relation to farmers. A negotiation context was created in which groups were able to negotiate who had been insulated from each other. The DfID project proposal developed by the volunteer, in itself a rare movement between levels of development engagement, was a transgression achieved through the particular talents of the individual involved. The proposal was strongly based on the learning process in which the volunteer and his colleagues had participated. To abstract lessons from this project and apply them elsewhere would be problematic without proper attention to this learning process.

## Lessons beyond volunteering: learning through participation

In general, little consideration is given to the significance of the participation of the outsider in development processes, either in the existing literature or in project documentation. Yet it is through this participation, not that of the beneficiaries of development, that critical learning for development goes on. The evidence presented in earlier chapters has shown how prolonged engagement with people from different backgrounds in the context of classification can stimulate learning processes which affect participants' accounts, positions, identities, and trajectories through life. Participation in an existing institution or organisation involves ‘learning from’, ‘learning with’, and ‘learning about’, but it is most significantly a process of *learning in*: participation in the contingencies of relationship, event, and activity as a process of learning. There are outcomes of this situated learning which should not be ignored simply because they fall outside the framework of technical development. For example, we have seen how volunteer placements can generate solidarity between participants as they come to recognize, acknowledge and partially share each others’ value frameworks.

The large literature on learning in development has dealt almost exclusively with organisational learning as a management tool, rather than the learning process as connection between individuals, organisations and the wider social context. Rondinelli (1984) was one of the first development practitioners to become concerned with the planning of development projects, and to argue for a change of orientation from centrally-planned and exhaustively-researched development solutions to development projects seen as field trials and experiments. He considered such a learning orientation necessary to achieve desired change in what were typically unpredictable and complex circumstances. Of an audit of World Bank projects, he notes that although the auditors recorded many failures to achieve targets, they did not appear to recognise that ‘many of the problems encountered are unpredictable, no matter how comprehensively the projects were planned’ (p.74). The successful practice of large scale development is necessarily a learning process, because of the complexity and unpredictability to which Rondinelli draws attention.

Dunn (1984) identifies the problem as the tendency of developers to assume that models from the physical science would be adequate to bring about social change. 'We have been inclined to practice a form of social engineering. It is presupposed that the change agents can act as though they are external to the process and have the knowledge and power to design a terminal state that will bring about consistent goals and controls in a deterministic fashion' (p.174). Neither such knowledge nor power is available. In similar vein to Rondinelli, but paying more attention to the implications for human actors, Korten (1984) argues for 'more appropriate programming frameworks and methods based on a *learning process approach* which recognises that in working with rural people, our knowledge of what is needed and our institutional capacity to do this are both limited… the challenge is to integrate action-taking, knowledge-creation, and institution-building into a coherent learning process' (ibid. p.188). Analysing three successful development initiatives, he found that 'each had a leader who spent time in the villages with an idea, tried it, accepted and corrected his errors, and built a larger organisation around the requirement of what he had learnt' (ibid. p.182). Each of the cases 'was distinguished by a *substantial continuity of personnel'* (ibid. p.184). He represented their experience in a three-stage process: learning to be effective, to be efficient, and then to expand (ibid. p.183). The study of volunteer placements suggests that the first of these stages is highly problematic in the context of difference, and repays further attention.

## Learning in development projects

The development project is still a dominant approach aimed at tackling poverty, situated between the discourse of development and local reality. Widespread failure to deliver on targets has led to some powerful critiques of the project, from sociological and anthropological perspectives. Following a survey of nearly four hundred project documents from five aid agencies in the 1980s, Rew (1997) comments that ‘with relatively few exceptions, it is the projects that are seen as the fundamental entities. The projects are not viewed as an explicit set of objectives and aims, planning processes and resource flows with respect to the recipient society. They are most often seen… as discrete economic and even physical entities… placed in the local society and economy for its members to open’ (p.91). ‘Cultural and social considerations are generally viewed as “outside” the agency and about “the customs of the locals” rather than as an essential aspect of technical assistance work and design’ (ibid. p.91). The most obvious failures of such approaches are embarrassing to relate, like a month-long immunisation campaign in Kenya where ‘promotional activities were planned to culminate in a day-long vaccination campaign… [when] since most people were fasting, the turn-out on the final day was extremely low’ (Nyamwaya 1997, p.187). More subtle are the outcomes of a perspective in which target groups are viewed as homogeneous, bounded and single-minded; such target groups exist only for the agency, against the differences in status and purpose which typify people in every community (ibid. p.188). The learning framework developed here suggests that the necessary integration of cultural, social and technical knowledge is only possible where the organisation of projects facilitates and builds on the learning of project personnel in the community concerned.

Practical experience in projects has led others to reflect on how they represent a 'difficult task of creating a recognisable, bounded, integrated whole out of some complex ingredients: local geography, community and economics, project 'inputs' (including people), and the procedures and mechanisms for changing the world that we call development practice' (Craig and Porter 1997, p.231). They describe a 'compelling framework' of 'project goals' which typically reflect 'timeless and highly moral' ideals, set against a set of observable and specific objectives (ibid. p.231). The work of the development professional moves between the logically-framed world of project documentation and the apparently chaotic reality: 'it is a production, large parts of which must be achieved without the subjects of development…' (ibid. p.233). 'Beneficiaries' are categorised within the project frame, rendering some people less visible than others. The authors' plea is for development practitioners to be less constrained and dominated by the project frame, more 'strategic' in managing the link between the donor and the people. The production of appropriate ‘strategy’ must be informed by a learning process.

In the projects discussed in these accounts, the position of the development practitioners is distinguished from the volunteer by the relationship to classification. Participation in projects depends on the interface between the project framework and the beneficiaries, in spite of local classifications. In contrast, the learning perspective developed in this thesis highlights the significance of the participation of an individual outsider in local practice, who is subject to local classifications. Through the outsiders’ participation, learning processes begin which entail the mutual influence of participants’ accounts and the distribution of resources.

The concept of classification integrates the problem of power with the epistemological difficulty of knowing the local situation. Where classifications are deeply ingrained in practices and identities, as within communities of practice, they constitute powerful boundaries to sharing information, as well as resources such as goods and money. That is to say, the same classification that contributes to the inequities within a given context also conceals information about those inequities. As we have seen in case studies, classification applies to the individual outsider just as to local participants, making the participation of the outsider problematic, and leading to a conflictual learning process experienced by many volunteers. Development projects of the kind described here do not require the participation of the outsider; but they leave basic classifications untouched.

## A critique of learning in participatory development

Over the last twenty years, a lot of energy and resources have been invested in participatory development. Attention to scale, coupled with the need to be seen to be including stakeholders in the processes of their own development, has led to the widespread adoption of techniques such as PRA. But these techniques are not a panacea. 'Handing over the stick' (Chambers 1997, p.105) is a powerful metaphor, but in practice it results in a change, not a reversal, of positioning. Whether or not they become aware of them, development practitioners, like those they are working with, are caught up in powerful classifications. To the extent that they have enough resources, they can set up or support structures such as PRA which embody their own ideals, ignoring the classifications with reference to which volunteers’ smaller-scale plans must be located. But the classifications

remain in society at large: ‘participatory processes have been increasingly approached as technical, management solutions to what are basically political issues’ (Guijt and Shah 1998, p.3). Cornwall has analysed PRA practice with respect to the dominant classification of gender: 'The use of PRA with ‘the community’ can all too easily end up with an unquestioning focus on soliciting the participation of those who are assumed to know, or taking versions produced by the dominant as if they represented the whole' (Cornwall 2000, p.15). Following a study of participatory workshops in East Africa, Pottier (1997) comments, 'Anthropologists must conceptualise participatory workshops as structured events, as politico-intellectual exchanges on a continuum going from highly structured and backed by authoritative voices, to more interactive occasions in which multiple voices are encouraged' (p.220). Facilitating a PRA which enables all voices to be heard is extremely difficult.

Some observers suggest that a solution might be reconceptualising participatory processes in terms of formal negotiations. Since '…case studies do indeed suggest that participatory intervention is rarely conflict-free… practitioners need to find a better language to anticipate and make use of the dynamics of conflict… effective social learning is unlikely to happen if it is not embedded in a well 'managed' negotiation prcess. At the same time, effective negotiation is impossible without a properly facilitated learning process' (Leeuwis 2000, p.954). I have suggested that participation in a process of negotiation plays a significant role in the learning of outsiders; here Leeuwis is proposing participatory development through negotiation facilitated by an outsider. But who is this outsider? Certainly it should be an authority figure, with experience; 'the facilitation of negotiations is not a task that can easily be left to relatively junior project staff…' (ibid. p.950). The unsustainable form of volunteer-facilitated projects which bring people together from different sides of a classification raises the question of what happens beyond the arena of negotiation when the powerful outsider has gone home.

Contrasted with the continuity of contact between volunteers and colleagues over two years, PRA and other such participatory arenas are a small part of any process of change, however empowering the process appears to be. 'The limitations of participatory methods become a problem where exaggerated confidence in their efficacy leads to their being used exclusively and uncritically… the transfer of methods from one context to another raises concerns familiar from past attempts to duplicate technological success stories by abstracting from the specific social, political and organisational conditions in which a specific technology emerged… it is important to look at what is going on *around* the techniques themselves…' (Biggs and Smith 1998, p.245). To understand what is going on around in the context of classification is to engage in a learning process.

Jones (2001) urges that the widespread adoption of participation as a mode of development practice should not obscure the need for analysis of that practice 'by different actors, in different localities, for different purposes' (ibid. p1). Based on a study in India, she considers that PRAs can play an important role, given other conditions. Although they constitute 'other spaces' in which gender and other norms are at least partially suspended, the author suggests that the experience of this space enables villagers to challenge the household norms they live by:

> '… the practice of unusual social relations within participatory arenas hold the potential to "push-out-on" normalised social relations in everyday lived spaces. This might be through active processes of reflection and conscientisation, and re-performances of the empowered thought and action…' (ibid. p.5).

Later in this account, it appears that it was the prolonged engagement of outsiders with villagers which was instrumental in breaking down the insulation of the 'other space' of the PRA arena: 'Once initial acceptance had been gained, SPEECH staff spent several months in communities moving from home to home engaging in "informal conversation"… to develop understanding of social contexts, and to strategically work *with* social hierarchies rather than confront them directly at the outset' (ibid. p.6). The research did not follow this process closely, but it was clearly a learning process for the outsiders, out of which the PRA arena became a space for what was effectively managed transgression of some of the social hierarchies they had learnt about. The author suggests that 'PRA played a relatively small role in the ongoing relationships between SPEECH staff and their community-partners' (ibid. p.32); seen as a space for transgression, it can be understood as a significant part of a learning process which involves everyone, including the outsiders.

In another example of participation through the mediation of outsiders, two British academics report their recent attempt to bridge classifications by facilitating an action-learning process on waste management and income generation in a Zimbabwean mining community (Johnson and Wilson, 2000). One stated hypothesis was that 'action-learning practices… can assist the expression and accommodation of social differences in development programs' (p.1894). They placed great emphasis on the concept of mediated negotiation: 'if the starting point is a context of social inequality… then the mediation process is critical' (ibid. p.1895). Their facilitation of the workshop represents a process of managed transgression of social classifications. For example, they were determined to engage the participation of members of the community alongside local Health Department officials and NGO workers, '… in particular the presumed enactors of the project, the members of a widows association' (ibid. p.1898) who it was hoped would generate income through the collection of waste. This workshop was the first occasion on which the widows had been invited to participate: the authors included them in preliminary interviews, and agreed that they would form a Shona-speaking group in the workshop. In the workshop itself, participants were asked to respond to a framework of questions to make clear their initial assumptions, and then invited to move towards agreement on accountability and monitoring (ibid. p.1894-1895). The widows' group, it turned out, was the only one aware of the recycling scheme already being operated by local schools. Their demand for legislation to make them the only legal operators of the scheme in the community demonstrated to council officials their own false assumptions about the homogeneity of the community.

Clearly this workshop involved transgression across many classifications in society; but the transgression was managed by outsiders. Workshop participants were certainly left more aware of the contradictions between their own accounts and the classification of social resources relating to the proposed project. As the authors suggest, 'the question for the future is whether there will be

separate learning processes taking place in parallel and focusing on different concerns… or "nested" and linked to reinforce the partnership' (ibid. p.1904). As with PRA, there is a question as to how far beyond the participatory arena changes in attitude and behaviour can reach. 'Given the fragmented, multiple actor world in which development interventions occur, how can different actors establish norms, rules, behaviors that give substantive meanings to terms such as participation and partnership and which enable them to work together not simply in a given, bounded project arena but on a longer-term and more sustained basis?' (ibid. p.1893). The processes of change observed in volunteer placements suggest that changes in society will only come about if and when participants outside the managed workshop transgress against the classifications themselves. Should such transgression lead to the establishment of a negotiation context beyond the workshop, that would represent empowerment.

A focus on the participation of beneficiaries will, I suggest, become a much more useful concept if we set it alongside the participation of outsiders and the processes by which they learn.

## Empowerment and learning

Empowerment is not about feeling empowered; it is about acting in the world to address one's positioning in respect of classification. The concept of classification is a reminder that participation is often a matter of power, and that people positioned by deep classifications have to learn to see themselves as actors who can transgress with respect to those classifications. Rowlands (1997) compares the process of empowerment of women in two settings in Honduras. She describes the society as strongly classified according to gender in relation to everyday work, a classification which is partially explained by the history of labour in the fruit plantations. She shows how women and men differ in respect of their control over material resources including money, the use of time with respect to childrearing practices, the use of space in terms of freedom to move around. In two case studies, she explores the processes by which groups of women have begun to address that classification. I intend to consider the cases she presents in relation to the learning framework I have constructed.

In both case studies awareness of contradiction on the part of women is a starting point for change, and this is promoted by the action of change agents, one of whom is an American volunteer, the other a local woman who had 'become an activist'. Many women describe a growth in their awareness: 'through becoming organised I have gained knowledge.. I have woken up in my mind… I have left my timidity behind because of being organised' (Esperanza, quoted in Rowlands. 1997 p.77). In each case study, women's initial transgression with respect to the gender classification involves the (relatively) small step of attending regular women's meetings. In many cases this has led to a development in the negotiation context with their partners.

In the first example, an externally-motivated and financed health development project, a network of women's health circles has been formed with a focus on child health. These have come to serve as a safe space for discussion and acting out of conflict and contradiction, notably concerning domestic violence. Women attending meetings describe the increase in their self-confidence and ability to communicate with different people.

There have been setbacks, and one of the consequences was tragic. One woman who became aware of the contradictions in her relationship eventually told her violent partner to leave; but when she began to support another woman in taking the same step, they were ambushed and brutally attacked by the men involved, and she was murdered. This violent reaction to further transgression of the gendered classification led many women to question what they were doing; but they have continued, seeing the circles as a forum for mutual support, as well as valuable in terms of skill-learning.

However, it appears that the potential for further action by the individual members and local circles may be limited by the organisational structure of the project. There is a set text to study, a certificate for women who complete two years, and the coordinating committee of five staff are paid. These staff dominate the agenda-setting and management of meetings, 'fostering, however unintentionally, a sense of dependence' (ibid. p.135) on the part of the participants. This structure represents limits to possible negotiations of women's roles within the project.

The other case study describes a process of far greater empowerment as Rowlands analyses it. Whilst there has been some external support (from Oxfam), this has been by way of training from and links with other organisations who have been working in the same way. The methodology has focused on the formation of autonomous groups of women, devising 'a method of working that will strengthen women's sense of self, and their identities as social and political actors, and help them to identify and meet their own needs' (ibid. p.76). The change agent at the heart of this development, Maria Esther, was convinced that this process would take time; it would need to 'build from the base' (ibid. p.69), so as not to destroy women's sense of identity as actors.

In terms of the learning framework in this thesis, empowerment makes intentional transgression possible. A booklet produced by the organisation in the second case study, 'Getting to know myself', can be read as preparing women to transgress against the classification which keeps them out of positions of authority. 'Let's have an example: They invite us to be co-ordinator or animator of a group. It's work we don't know, it's a new responsibility. So we say *I can't*... She is right in part… Because in her soul she has a feeling which is pushing her to say *I can't*. What is that feeling? She feels fear…' (ibid. p.108). The 'core' of the empowerment process can be seen as involving 'fundamental psychological and psycho-social processes and changes, to which individual women alluded repeatedly… the development of self-confidence and self-esteem… a sense of agency… dignity…' (ibid. pp.111-113). The individual and shared accounts of selves as actors is much stronger than in the first case. Such accounts of self makes possible transgression of existing classifications, and negotiation with differently positioned actors. The transgression of the programme against the demands of a new priest that they rejoin the more established women's programme in the church, in a context where all women involved were strongly Catholic, served to determine much more strongly their identity and independence (ibid. p.101).

What is not clear is the role of change agents in these processes of empowerment. Rowlands stresses that change agents must have attitudes of 'complete respect for each individual and the group; humility and an eagerness for learning to be mutual; flexibility…'; and that they need

'facilitation skills, active listening skills and non-directive questioning skills' (ibid. p.136). On the evidence presented, it would be difficult to differentiate between the two change agents involved in these terms.

Perhaps the most critical difference between the two change agents is their need to see quick results. In the first case, the construction of an externally-funded project enabled the volunteer to see results in terms of the participation of women in meetings, and within those meetings women were able to express themselves and gain strength from each other. But as with some of the projects constructed in the volunteer placements I have explored, there were unintended consequences of this structure. In response to the gendered classification which positioned them, women's accounts of themselves were as dependent actors. These accounts were unchallenged by their position as members of groups facilitated by others. In other words, the structure of the project created a new classification against which they would have to transgress in order to widen the context for negotiation of roles.

In the second example, Maria Esther resisted pressure to achieve quick results. She was committed to facilitating a learning process in which women could engage, involving their construction of an alternative account of themselves and their relations with other people, based partly on a Biblical account of the worth of each human being. With the example of Maria Esther and the rest of the group in this process, women slowly generated a shared account of individual worth, solidarity and political capability.

It appears that empowerment depends not so much on the attitudes and skills of the change agent as on their own position as learners. Both change agents were aware of contradiction in the lives of women, and both encouraged their transgression. But through Maria Esther's transgression with respect to both church authorities and well-meaning international donors, a context for negotiation was constructed with those authorities, in which the timeframe and other details of the relationship could be agreed that did not construct new classifications. In comparison, the volunteer sought help from an international donor on its own terms; the result was a more conventional project framework which insulated most women from decision-making and control.

This review of perspectives of outsider involvement in development has indicated that the learning of outsiders has a largely unrecognised significance in processes of participation and empowerment, and suggested that the approach of the agency to learning can affect the way the change agent goes about developing organisations and networks. Agency accounts of learning should be considered alongside the understanding of process developed in earlier chapters.

## Learning and the development practitioner

Kaplan (2000) suggests that hitherto, Southern NGOs and the development practitioners working with them have focused on assistance in the form of tangible and physical inputs, from training courses to computers, which has largely failed. Technical cooperation or assistance (TA) as direct support to health and education systems is increasingly discredited in international accounts, with the Dutch taking apparently decisive action:

> 'Last year… we decided to close down the department that sends Dutch experts to the developing world. There was fierce parliamentary and public debate. I saw an article by a Dutch expert who was against reducing the number of development workers in the field. The article was headed: "If the (Dutch) doctor leaves, development stops." And another quote: "Herfkens kills babies"… [but] The end users of TA are usually hidden away in the middle levels of developing country organizations and are rarely consulted. Many do not even think of TA as something they can mould to fit their own needs… TA still accounts for about a quarter of ODA. That is about fifteen billion dollars a year. We owe it to ourselves and to the recipient countries to use that immense sum of money as effectively as possible' (Herfkens, 2001).

For Kaplan (2000), the challenge for development practitioners aspiring to build capacity is to become 'artists of the invisible' (p.524) able to facilitate the development of 'intangible' features of organisations such as organisational attitude, vision, and strategy. They should be able to

> 'read the developmental phase at which a particular organisation may be and then to devise a response which may be appropriate to that organisation at that particular time... The ability to read a developmental situation requires a background theory—which few practitioners employ— but it also requires an understanding of development, the ability to observe closely without judgement, sensitivity, empathy, an ability to penetrate to the essence of a situation, to separate the wheat from the chaff, so to speak, the ability to create an atmosphere of trust out of which an organisation may yield up the secrets which it will normally hold back (even from itself) in defensive reaction, the ability really to hear and listen and see, the ability to resist the short sharp expert response…' (ibid. p.523).

Unsurprisingly, there is a scarcity of practitioners with such qualities. Contemplating a somewhat similar list, Burnett and Martyn Johns (1999) note that 'this type of work is likely to remain a low profile activity for VSO given the limited supply of volunteers capable of facilitating the OD process' (p.12).

So much of the complexity of a local situation is hidden from outsiders, intentionally or otherwise. Crewe (1997) tells the story of outsiders' promotion of cooking stoves, carefully designed to reduce wood consumption but in ignorance of the subtleties of women's existing practices. The stoves were given to families in a massive World Bank funded environmental project, then subsequently ignored, or used as planting pots. Years later, a new design by Southern engineers has sold millions. Van Ufford (1993) shows how ignorance is produced and maintained in a development project by those operating between the donors and the beneficiaries, shielding the donors from knowledge they really would rather not have.

There are similarities here with the sustainable livelihoods approach (SLA) which DfID and other agencies are adopting (DfID, 1999). I described earlier this holistic intervention through attention to all the factors affecting people's livelihoods in a particular context. It is probably too soon to say whether it is attractively comprehensive, or too sophisticated to be used. A report of an early example of a livelihoods perspective in a watershed development project in India emphasises the pragmatism of the approach:

> 'Experience has shown the futility of pursuing a donor-driven ‘development agenda’; donors need to listen more to their partners and explore the scope for harmonisation with their development targets; this is perhaps the most pragmatic aspect of SLAs. Without a common understanding of the development context and the desire on the part of partner governments as well as donors to try a new approach, attempting new ways of working is

> futile and bound to fail… without such shared understanding the approach is seen as a donor's agenda and will cease when the donor goes…' (DfID, 2000??)

Within the livelihoods framework, the link between livelihood assets and livelihood strategies is understood as being mediated by societal structures (government, private sector) and processes (laws, policies, institutions, culture). All of these are seen as open to participatory intervention within the framework, except 'culture', which, it is suggested, is 'not an area for direct donor activity' (DfID, 1999 section 2.4.2); the implication is that in terms of intervention, culture is somehow separable from law, policy and institution. This is a problematic assumption in the light of volunteer experience.

Within the framework documents, there is little sense of who will use them: the framework is presented as a freely available tool, and so it becomes available for misuse. Project processes which become dominated by the framework may overlook the importance of participation; indeed there is a warning within the framework to this effect. The process may be subverted by those who have power: an understanding of the working of classifications is essential for those taking decisions in the project:

> The challenge is for the project to really make a difference to poor people's lives, because so much about sustainability depends on keeping the 'haves' happy and, for those in powerful positions to feel that their power is enhanced. It is a fine balance... (DfID, 2000??)

On the basis of what learning is that fine balance to be achieved? Accounts of capacity building, skill sharing and poverty alleviation through holistic projects pay little attention to the process which has appeared to be so critical in volunteer placements: a process of learning in context through participation. This focus on the learning process of the engaged outsider has suggested a critique of these latest revisions to development approaches. Both sustainable livelihoods and new approaches to capacity building appear to assume the availability of increasingly omniscient outsiders, able to discern from afar the complexities of communities, organisations and individuals; able to 'perceive' and 'penetrate' social reality whilst creating trust and confidence with near strangers. The study of volunteer placements gives ground for challenging this assumption, and suggests a framework for consideration of the engagement between individuals from North and South within development projects of all kinds.

## Conclusion

Through this study of volunteer placements, a framework of learning has been developed which is used to interpret the learning processes involved in the interaction of people from different backgrounds. Learning is understood as a process of mutual influence between people's accounts and the distribution of social resources (time, space, material resources, social positioning and information). Most critical is learning in relation to the social boundaries or classifications which are present in all social contexts, restricting the movement of resources; for it is there that structures and habits of power are addressed.

This framework of learning has been shown to explain some of the differences between volunteer placements, and to provide an interpretation of the aftermath of a placement. When paradigms of

development are examined in the light of this framework, critical questions are raised about the agents of change which these paradigms assume, and the ways in which they learn in relation to social boundaries or classifications. It is suggested that many development efforts will continue to flounder while the nature of learning in these contexts is not properly understood. A plea arising from this thesis is the need to take more seriously what is significant in the approach to others and their contexts represented in some volunteer placements. In the most successful placements, learning processes include participants' awareness of contradiction, transgression in respect to dominant classification, constructing a context for negotiation.

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