

# Experiences of Voluntourism in Guangzhou, Mainland China

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## **Abstract**

Volunteer tourism is a relatively new field that usually involves a young person volunteering in a foreign country to improve the social conditions of a local community. In the past decade, there has been an academic focus on this topic that suggests there are potential benefits for the participants involved. However, critical analyses from a post-development perspective have recently highlighted the number of risks involved with these projects. The findings from these studies also emphasise the underlying goals of voluntourism, which can include creating a connection and understanding between the people involved in these projects, in addition to the projects being viewed as significant by the participants. This thesis will test if the experiences of voluntourists in a selected voluntourism project in Guangzhou, Mainland China relate to this goal. The results revealed that the project was considered significant by the participants involved as a result of recognising the importance of place to all participants, the identity of the foreign volunteer and how they relate to place and the members of that place. The recommendations from the academic literature can also lead to a long term connection and greater understanding between the people involved, by making comparisons with the process of integration. Through these findings, it can be argued the experiences from the voluntourism project in Mainland China relate to the underlying goals of voluntourism, and a new body of knowledge is emerging in this field, which emphasises ways to improve the implementation of these projects.

**Keywords:** AIESEC, Foreign Volunteers, Guangzhou, Mainland China, Sending Organisation, Volunteer Tourism.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

The idea of volunteer tourism, or voluntourism, has evolved over time as a result of historical processes and the flow of people. Volunteer tourism is a relatively new term, and currently there is no widely accepted definition (Benson, 2010). The general understanding incorporates aspects of volunteering and tourism, and involves an individual going to a foreign country to volunteer in a project, but spending a portion of that time on holiday (Simpson, 2005). It is arranged by a sending organisation and the projects focus on improving the wellbeing of the host community (Keese, 2011). In the past decade, there has been a growth in the number of foreign volunteers, sending organisations and projects being implemented. This is largely due to increased knowledge of these programs, as well as the creation of a volunteering niche by sending organisations that target young university students or recent graduates wanting to gain international experience (Guttentag, 2009; Keese, 2011).

In addition to the growing number of voluntourism programs, there has been a parallel growth in the academic literature focused on this sector. The early studies from the year 2000 concentrated on foreign volunteers, namely with regard to their motivations and potential benefits, and concluded these programs were beneficial (Wearing, 2001; Benson, 2010). Recently however, has been an increase in the number of studies on voluntourism that incorporate a post-development perspective, which highlights the real risks involved, mainly for the host community (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010). These include the exploitation of the target audience, the formation of unequal power relationships, and control of the projects staying with the foreign agency (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). Through this, the underlying goals of voluntourism, which focus on creating a connection and understanding between the people involved, as well as being significant to the participants, has been emphasised (Benson, 2010). Recent academic literature has focused on improving these volunteer tourism projects by highlighting a number of recommendations (Benson, 2010). Three main suggestions relate to the significance of using appropriate foreign volunteers, the importance of incorporating the host community, and the relevance of cultural exchange in these projects (Raymond & Hall, 2008; Wearing & Grabowski, 2010; Coren & Gray, 2012). This thesis will centre on the underlying goals of voluntourism, and reveal how the experiences of voluntourists in a selected case study

in Mainland China compare with them, and the role the recommendations have had in the project. The Green Power Now (GPN) project was implemented in Guangzhou, Mainland China by the organisation AIESEC<sup>1</sup>. This project involves giving classes on environmental protection in local schools in the city. Through this case study, it will be argued as a result of these recommendations, the volunteer tourists and AIESEC members considered the projects to be significant, and their experiences related to the underlying goals of voluntourism, by making comparisons to the process of integration.

The following research aim has been proposed: *How do the experiences of voluntourists compare to the underlying goals of voluntourism, in a selected project in Mainland China?* To explore this aim, four research questions have been posed.

1. What were the expectations and motivations of the voluntourists and sending organisation?
2. Was the project considered to be significant to the voluntourists and sending organisation?
3. What were the recommendations to achieving this goal, and were these evident in the case study?
4. How may these experiences of a short term voluntourism project relate to the underlying goals of voluntourism?

This thesis will first focus on the GPN case study, highlighting the expectations and outcomes on the foreign volunteers and AIESEC members involved, in order to determine if it was considered to be significant. Next, the ways the recommendations were or were not evident will be examined, followed by a comparison with the underlying goals. In order to do this, the GPN case study will be explored in relation to place, identity and power, while the findings of this thesis will be discussed in relation to the wider literature with regard to the future of voluntourism.

## **Overview of methods**

The central aim of the thesis is to highlight the perspectives of the participants in the voluntourism project, their expectations and outcomes they faced, and if they considered the project to be successful or not. In order to do this, the thesis uses a historical-

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<sup>1</sup> AIESEC stands for the “*Association internationale des étudiants en sciences économiques et commerciales*”, however, now it is only referred to by the acronym (AIESEC International, 2008, p.8).



hermeneutic science framework, which highlights the importance of alternative and local forms of knowledge (Seeböhm, 2007). There will be a strong focus on qualitative and participatory methodology in order to present the views of the participants involved, as well as to achieve the underlying aim of this thesis, and represent the views of the project.

This case study was chosen due to the growing trend of voluntourism in Mainland China, and also due to my already established connections with the AIESEC committee in Guangzhou (Shao et al., 2011). The year before researching for this thesis, I volunteered in the project in order to gain contacts, and to explore the possibility of undertaking a project with them. As a result, my positionality and connections with this organisation have influenced the aim and perspective of the thesis, as well as my view of volunteer tourism projects in general. I recognise there are potential benefits and real risks involved, but also realise there can be ways to improve the programs to be beneficial for the participants.

In order to discuss the research aim of the thesis, qualitative methods have been implemented. Firstly, informal interviews, discussions and/or surveys were used with the foreign volunteers and AIESEC members, and the most suitable options were chosen by each individual. The ethical considerations were also a significant part of my thesis and influence my research aim, as well as the way I gathered the information. In addition, personal observations were a key method used because I was involved in the project and was able to interact directly with the other participants. By using these methods, my aim is to present the views and opinions of those involved in the AIESEC project in this thesis (Özerdem & Bowd, 2013).

## **Overview of the thesis**

This thesis has been divided into five main chapters, excluding the introduction, conclusion and appendix. Chapter two begins with the literature review of voluntourism, highlighting the importance of volunteering and tourism, as well as the growth of this new field of study over time. Through this, its growing importance has been emphasised, which is followed by a rise in academic volunteer tourism literature. Next, the debate surrounding voluntourism is discussed, highlighting the positives as well as criticism of these projects. As a result, recommendations have been suggested by academia, emphasising the role of the participants involved and the interactions between them. It is argued these suggestions have the potential to improve volunteer tourism projects, while reducing the risks for the

participants involved. This chapter concludes with the research aim and underlying research questions.

Chapter three focuses on the case study used in the thesis, the GPN project conducted by AIESEC. The focus and importance of this international organisation is discussed, as well as their fundamental goals and aims. This is followed by an overview of the history of AIESEC and the aspects of the projects it implements. Next, there is a more detailed discussion on the local AIESEC committees based in Mainland China and Guangzhou, in relation to the country setting, and voluntourism in the country. Finally, there is a discussion of the GPN project, which is implemented by the locally based Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS) committee of AIESEC in Guangzhou.

Chapter four highlights the methodology used for the research aspect of the thesis. Firstly the research aim and questions are reinforced, followed by the underlying epistemology framework, methodology and the ethics implemented. Due to my previous experience and connection with AIESEC and the project, the ethics and my positionality are key aspects of this chapter and highlight the factors involved in conducting the research, as well as my perspective of volunteer tourism projects. This chapter concludes with the methods implemented, how the data was analysed and the importance of feedback to the thesis.

Chapter five is the results section of the thesis. This chapter predominately focuses on the first two research questions, the expectations and outcomes of the voluntourists and AIESEC members in the project, and if they considered it to be significant. The findings for each have been divided into those related to the project, social relationship, cultural exchange and personal development. Due to the importance of a participatory approach in this thesis, the views and opinions of the participants are a key focal point of this chapter.

Chapter six is the discussion section and concentrates in detail on the four research questions presented at the beginning of the thesis. The AIESEC project is discussed in relation to the influence of volunteerism and tourism, followed by the evidence of the recommendations in the case study; the importance of using appropriate foreign volunteers, incorporating the host community and cultural exchange. In order to compare the experiences of the voluntourists with the underlying goals of voluntourism, the process of integration will be used, focusing on the importance of place, identity and power. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the future of volunteer tourism, as well as giving

recommended improvements for future volunteer tourism projects based on the findings from this study.

In summary, this thesis will argue that criticism and real risks exist in volunteer tourism projects, but this is not always the case. By concentrating on an organisation that gives power to the host community and ensures an exchange between participants, these programs can be significant and successful. Due to the history and nature of volunteer tourism projects, risks can arise, especially for those who are most vulnerable. However, by analysing the academic literature of volunteer tourism, it becomes evident there is a new body of knowledge becoming evident on this topic. Rather than a critical viewpoint, it can be argued this knowledge attempts to improve these projects, while also highlighting their important role around the world. It is in this realm that my thesis sits, while attempting to further the understanding of the future of volunteer tourism.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter will focus on the main ideas surrounding the literature of this thesis. It will begin by highlighting volunteer tourism and the components that make up this field. Through this discussion, the stages of volunteer tourism over time will be discussed in combination with colonialism, development, culture and integration, arguing these are key ideas that have influenced its formation. Following this, the debate surrounding volunteer tourism will be discussed, highlighting the perspectives and recommendations from the wider literature. Finally, by taking into account the suggestions for volunteer tourism projects, the underlying research aim of the thesis will be proposed.

### 2.1 Volunteering Overseas

*“If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help somebody.”*

*Chinese Proverb (Anonymous, n.d)*

The idea of helping others without any form of reward has been an underlying motivation for a number of historical and present day global processes. It is believed altruism, which is *“a concern for the welfare of others that is intrinsically motivated and expressed through such voluntary pro-social acts as sharing, cooperating, and helping”*, is a key factor involved in volunteering and the primary motive is improving the needs of others (Shaffer, 2009, p.326). However, volunteering is a broad field and can include travelling to foreign countries to address the needs of others (Benson, 2010). A growing notion has been of young people going overseas to help others in the form of volunteering in projects (Simpson, 2005). This thesis will focus on this idea, commonly known as volunteer tourism, and the outcomes it can have on the volunteers, in relation to the underlying goals of this idea (Benson, 2010). There will be a specific focus on improving these projects to better implement the voluntourism projects.

### 2.2 Volunteer Tourism

Volunteer tourism, or voluntourism, is a relatively new term and to date there has been no widely accepted definition (Benson, 2010). It involves the idea of an individual going on

holiday and deciding to do some volunteering on the side, or going overseas to volunteer, but spending a portion of that time as a tourist (Stoddart & Rogerson, 2004; Simpson, 2005). The common definition that is proposed by Wearing (2001) is as follows:

*“the generic term ‘volunteer tourism’ applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment” (p. 1).*

However, in order to go into more detail about this phenomenon, the two main underlying processes, volunteering and tourism, will be discussed.

### **2.2.1 Volunteering**

*“When helping others, do not look for a reward; if you are looking for rewards, don't help others.”*

*Chinese Proverb (Anonymous, n.d)*

Volunteering, or voluntarism, is a growing sector that is having numerous impacts on societies throughout the world. Although this idea may appear simple, the concept of a volunteer is difficult to define because there is no standard practice of volunteering as it can involve a range of different activities and roles (Bussell & Forbes, 2002). Furthermore, volunteers cannot be classified into a single homogenous group, as a result of the diverse backgrounds, experiences, characteristics and skills (Bussell & Forbes, 2002).

The majority of accepted definitions of voluntarism argue it involves an element of exchange with regard to costs and benefits (Cnaan et al., 1996). Although volunteering often *“involves contributions of time without coercion or remuneration”* (Bussell & Forbes, 2002, p.246), due to the complex nature of the sector, this statement becomes a generalisation. As a result, Cnaan et al. (1996) emphasise how coercion and remuneration are not standard, and conclude that the perception of what a volunteer is depends on the relative costs and benefits to the volunteer. Bussell and Forbes (2002) note that *“the greater the net costs to the volunteer, the purer the volunteering activity and hence the more the person is a real volunteer”* (p.105). Furthermore, Snyder and Omoto (2008) identify six defining characteristics of voluntarism, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Classifications of a ‘Volunteer’**

1	The first defining feature of volunteerism is the actions of those involved must be voluntary, and done in accordance with the actor’s free will, without obligation or coercion in the initial stages. It is common for a volunteer to have obligations as personal relationships develop between volunteer and the agency/organisation.
2	Secondly, the act of volunteering needs to involve an amount of decision making, rather than a reactive action for assistance or emergency help. However, there is dispute regarding emergency help and if it can be classified as volunteering. Bussell and Forbes (2002) note the actual amount of time spent volunteering is the main deciding factor.
3	As highlighted, the third defining characteristic of volunteering is time. More specifically, the act of volunteering as well as the volunteering activity must occur over a period of time, from weeks to years, rather than a one-time event.
4	Similar to the first characteristic, the fourth feature is the decision to volunteer occurs without the expectation of reward (in monetary terms) or punishment, and is based on personal ambitions.
5	The fifth defining feature is that volunteering concentrates on providing people or causes that desire help. As a result, the act of volunteerism is not imposed, but should be willingly requested or accepted by recipients.
6	Finally, volunteerism is performed on the behalf of people or causes, and is often through organisations or agencies. Consequently, volunteerism is viewed as a formal way of helping, and occurs through or in conjunction with organisations, rather than informal acts of helping.

After Source: Snyder and Omoto, 2008, pp.2-3.

These characteristics highlight how volunteerism involves the participant deciding to volunteer, and these actions “*reflect processes of choice, active decision making, and the influence of personal values and motivations*” (Snyder & Omoto, 2008, p.447). From this, the following definition of volunteerism has been proposed by Snyder and Omoto (2008) below.

*“Volunteerism refers to freely chosen and deliberate helping activities that extend over time, are engaged in without expectation of reward or other compensation and often through formal organizations, and that are performed on behalf of causes or individuals who desire assistance”* (Snyder & Omoto, 2008, p.3).

The growth of volunteering has become more apparent in recent years. In 2000, it was estimated 83.9 million people in the United States engaged in some form of volunteerism, while half the population of the United Kingdom engages in this activity (Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Snyder & Omoto, 2008, p.1). On average, volunteers donated 3.6 hours per

week, which equated to a monetary value exceeding US\$239.2 billion (Snyder & Omoto, 2008, p.1).

Despite the link between helping others and volunteer tourism, the true nature of the latter is not yet fully explored (Benson, 2010). It becomes evident that volunteer tourism does incorporate an aspect of volunteering, and is related to the benefits and net costs involved. However, it is set apart from the discussed view of volunteering due to the tourism aspect.

### **2.2.2 Tourism**

The study of tourism covers a vast field, but can be broadly defined in “*terms of particular activities selected by choice and undertaken outside of the home environment*” (Cruz, 2006, p.2), and can be understood as the commercial operation and organisation of visits to places of interest (Cruz, 2006). However, in relation to volunteering and volunteer tourism, the main area of study is alternative tourism.

The understanding of alternative tourism is contentious and is a vague term that lacks concrete definition (Butler, 1992; Isaac, 2009). It can be interpreted in a number of ways, but often refers to types of tourism that are not associated with ‘mass tourism’ (Butler, 1992; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008). Mass tourism is defined as facilities and attractions that are designed for a large number of tourists, and is often highly commercialised (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008). Alternative tourism can range from being the polar opposite to mass tourism (Weaver & Lawton, 2002) to being the result of new market niches being created due to demands from consumers (Douglas, Douglas & Derrett, 2001).

Alternative tourism often focuses on participatory practices, cultural preservation and ecological sustainability, with the local communities as the main focus (Keese, 2011). It can also include ecotourism, backpacking, the gap year and voluntourism (Keese, 2011). Other labels for this term include ‘new tourism’ (Poon, 1993; Mowforth & Munt, 2003), ‘low-impact tourism’ (Wearing & Neil, 1999) and ‘sustainable tourism’ (Wheeller, 1993). The idea of tourism has changed over time as the implications of this process have become apparent. In addition, there are a number of similarities with the process of volunteering, which has created the idea of voluntourism. The following section will go into detail of this process, and discuss how it has evolved.

### 2.2.3 Volunteer Tourism

*“The happiest people I have known have been those who gave themselves no concern about their own souls, but did their uttermost to mitigate the miseries of others.”*

*Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815-1902)*

*Social Activist*

From these discussions on volunteering and tourism, it is argued voluntourism combines aspects of both to achieve the goal of providing *“sustainable alternative travel that can assist in community development, scientific research or ecological restoration”* (Wearing, 2004, p.217). It can also be considered to be *“a form of civic engagement through which individuals can make meaningful contributions to ‘their own visions’ of societal well-being”* (Brown, 1997, p.3). With regard to the classification of a volunteer by Snyder and Omoto (2008), a person involved in volunteer tourism does so through his or her free will, and makes a conscious decision to do so. Because many of the projects are located in distant countries, significant planning must be put into getting there, so it is not a spontaneous event (Ingram, 2010). Those involved in volunteer projects often last for a few weeks to many months, but some can stay up to a year (Ingram, 2010). Furthermore, these projects are often arranged through sending organisations, and more specifically non-governmental organisations (NGOs) (Keese, 2011). These are *“private, not for-profit organisations that have been [involved] in delivering international development assistance for many decades”* (Keese, 2011, p.258). However, these can also include private companies, universities, charities and governments (Söderman & Seed, 2008; Guttentag, 2009). It is expected the sending organisations work with the local community to ensure they want the help, but it should not be assumed that these organisations always consult closely with the host communities (Guttentag, 2009).

Voluntourism also often focuses on the wellbeing of local communities by concentrating on the social sector or on the environment. Volunteer tourism often involves contributions without remuneration and relates to the relative costs and benefits argument. Although people involved may receive reduced accommodation or food costs, or even a local salary, this is not always the case (Ingram, 2010). Furthermore, many volunteer tourists may need to pay the organisation involved, as well as pay for travel expenses (Keese, 2011). As a result, the monetary costs in some cases are greater than the monetary benefits, so it can be argued that some can be considered ‘pure’ volunteers.



In recent years, the main focus of research has been on the outcomes of the foreign volunteers (Brown & Morrison, 2003; Coren & Grey, 2012) and more specifically the self (Wearing, 2001; Wearing & Deane, 2003). This research has gone into depth on the motivations of those who volunteer and suggests these can be divided into two categories (Daldeniz, & Hampton, 2010). Firstly, altruistic motives can include wanting to work with less developed communities, helping in certain sectors such as the environment, and wanting to travel with a purpose and make a difference (Guttentag, 2009; Sin, 2009; Daldeniz, & Hampton, 2010). Non-altruistic motives may include improving one's curriculum vitae through practical international work experience, self-enhancement, social interaction with people from around the globe, and a sense of accomplishment and belonging (Sin, 2009; Daldeniz, & Hampton, 2010; Chen & Chen, 2011). Furthermore, gaining life and person skills, as well as confidence and independence, are key motivators (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010).

In addition, Daldeniz and Hampton (2010) have divided the foreigners into two categories. The first group is classified as VOLUNtourists, who focus on the volunteer project, but spend a portion of their time travelling as a tourist. Their main motivation is the development project, and an altruistic want to help the community (Daldeniz and Hampton, 2010). In comparison, the other group is known as volunTOURISTS, who want to be a tourist, and do some volunteering on the side, usually to be able to see more of the country for longer. Their main motivation is the tourism aspect of the trip. Broad and Jenkins (2008) highlight the importance of concentrating on the motivations of the volunteers, and state *"understanding volunteers' motivations is vital to the design and operation of successful conservation programmes that rely on volunteers as their primary labour source"* (p.72).

Other studies focus on the characteristics of the volunteers themselves, and found the majority of volunteer tourists are 18 to 25 years old, and are usually university students or recent graduates (Keese, 2011; Kumaran & Pappas, 2011; Coren & Gray, 2012). The majority are from the developed world (i.e. United States, Western Europe, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) and volunteer in developing countries (mainly countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and South America), although not always (Kumaran & Pappas, 2011; Coren & Gray, 2012). Consequently, it is argued these young people benefit from volunteer tourism for a number of reasons (Benson 2010; Kumaran & Pappas, 2011; Coren & Gray, 2012).

The projects volunteer tourists are involved in are similar to volunteer and alternative tourism projects. They may include teaching English, public health campaigns, construction projects, environmental education, social services for women and youth, habitat protection and sustainable agriculture (Wearing & Grabowki, 2010). However, there is also a strong influence from tourism. Many voluntourism projects are located in places of interest, where foreigners would want to travel to, as well as help, highlighting the importance of place (Keese, 2011).

Place is an important geographical term that is relevant to volunteer tourism. Place can be understood as a defined space that is *“invested with understandings of behavioural appropriateness, cultural expectations, and so forth”* (Harrison & Dourish, 1997, p.3). Push and pull factors help determine movement to these places, and studies have highlighted the pull factors of the destination are key drivers. Keese (2011) concluded that the six main themes that influenced where volunteer tourism projects were set up were, *“safety, need, attractiveness of place, presence of local partner organisations, previous staff experience or personal contacts and accessibility”* (p.265, 267). This means the way place is advertised can help determine how many foreigners go there to work in a project (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010). As a result, although the volunteer and altruistic aspects of voluntourism are important, the tourism factor is also relevant. Many volunteers also participate in travelling and sightseeing activities that are associated with a vacation (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010). As one of the directors for volunteer projects put it, *“we [the sending organisation] lean towards places where we can have quality volunteer programmes, but it doesn’t hurt to be near Machu Picchu”* (Keese, 2011, p.277). Furthermore, voluntourism takes into account the possible risks to the local community, as well as building relationships between all participants involved (McGehee & Andereck, 2009).

The main goals of voluntourism can be seen as creating benefits for the participants involved (Benson, 2010). This can involve tangible benefits, such as focusing on a specific need, or intangible benefits, such as confidence, which may not be identified in the project scope (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010). However, previous research on case studies have identified a connection and understanding between the place and people involved, as a key goal of voluntourism projects (Benson, 2010). This thesis will focus on these ideas of connection and understanding, as well as the project being significant to the participants, as the underlying goals of voluntourism (Benson, 2010). As a result, comparisons will be

made to the process of integration, a related theory to these goals, to explore the connections of short term projects will long term goals, later in this thesis.

Due to the links with tourism and the idea of helping others, voluntourism is becoming increasingly popular, and thus growing in importance (Lorimer, 2010). Mintel (2008) estimated that this market reached US\$150 million in 2006, while Tourist Research and Marketing (2008) notes that expenditure generated by volunteer tourism is between US\$1.6 and US\$2.6 billion, with 1.6 million volunteer tourists per year. In 2003, it was estimated that approximately 250,000 people in the United Kingdom aged between 18 and 25 took a gap year to volunteer overseas (Jones, 2004). This trend has also been driven by high profile cases, such as Prince William and Prince Harry, going overseas to volunteer (Holman, 2004).

This growth of volunteer tourism has also been accompanied by a growing body of research. Although there was minimal research on this topic prior to 2000, the catalyst for volunteer tourism seemed to be the book *Volunteer Tourism: Experiences that make a Difference* by Wearing (2001) (Benson, 2010). Since then, there has been the publication of three academic books (Lyons and Wearing, 2008; Benson, 2010; Holmes & Smith, 2012), as well as a range of academic journal articles. Furthermore, there has been a rise in internet websites, such as <http://www.voluntourism.org/>, which focus on volunteer tourism, and includes blogs, newsletters and information about different programs (Voluntourism, 2012). Despite this growing interest and apparent realisation in recent decades, volunteer tourism has a long history related to the processes of colonialism and development.

### **2.3 The Stages of Voluntourism through Colonialism, Development and Culture**

There has been a steady growth of individuals travelling to another country to volunteer in order to improve aspects of the wellbeing of a local community. This process is having a range of effects in the origin and destination countries, from the local to the national scale. However, despite the common belief that international volunteerism is a new phenomenon, it has a long history related to the process of colonialism, development and links with culture (Fee & Mdee, 2010). The following sections will highlight the connection with each, by focusing on the processes of voluntourism and tourism.

### **2.3.1 Colonialism**

The idea of visiting developing countries to improve aspects of their lives can be traced back to colonialism. Colonialism can be understood as the acquisition, establishment and expatriation of a colony by an outside territory (Osterhammel, 2005). It often involves a minority of foreign ‘invaders’ claiming sovereignty and changing the social structure, economy and government of a territory (Osterhammel, 2005; Anghie, 2007). The former often reject the cultural and social values of the colonised population, while pursuing the interests of a foreign territory (Osterhammel, 2005). As a result, it is argued an unequal relationship is formed between the indigenous population and the colonisers, which extends to all aspects of life, including the economic, social, cultural and political sectors (Osterhammel, 2005).

The spread of the European Empires since the 1500s was driven by a series of factors, including exploration, the need for more resources and power (Bloom & Hobby, 2010). Many colonisers were driven by curiosity of the unknown, of places completely different from their own, and the riches that may be found (Bloom & Hobby, 2010). Through these conquests, Christianity was also spread throughout the world (Bloom & Hobby, 2010). Missionaries can be considered some of the first international volunteers, who focused on the wellbeing of local communities (Simpson, 2005; Lewis, 2006). Aid, through economic, as well as social and cultural means such as health and religion, were given to the locals of these colonies in an attempt to improve various aspects of their lives (Clark, 2011). As a result, there was growth in the number of missions for aid in foreign and unknown countries regarded as ‘backwards’ (Clark, 2011; Litonjua, 2012). Nevertheless, colonialism and the spread of European religion and ideas were viewed as superior to indigenous societies, and the same occurred with the first international volunteers, whether they wanted it to or not. The unequal power relationships formed when the colonisers arrived were maintained and exacerbated by these foreigners (Clark, 2011; Litonjua, 2012).

### **2.3.2 Development**

The rise of the phenomenon of international volunteers can also be traced back to the 1950s, with the emergence of the idea of development. United States President Truman’s

1949 speech gave the world the word ‘development’, which would help guide the future, as well as describe a process that arguably had been going on for centuries (George, 1997). In his speech he stated that:

*“We (the developed, Northern countries) must embark on a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half of 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 the more prosperous areas”*  
(United States Government Printing Office, 1964, p.5).

This perception that half of the world’s population, also known as the global South or developing countries, was underdeveloped and was in need of the help of the wealthy, capitalist countries, was spread around the globe (George, 1997). Consequently, a binary was created between the developing and developed countries (or us and them), an unequal power relationship was highlighted, and the first theory of development was formed (Potter et al., 2008; Litonjua, 2012).

### *Modernisation Theory*

During the 1950s the idea of development was aligned with modernisation theory (Potter et al., 2008). Modernisation theory highlights that development is a process, and if the correct path is followed, countries that are viewed as being traditional, backward and inferior (in contrast with the global North) can become modern (Potter et al., 2008; Litonjua, 2012). The internal economic, social and political sectors of developing countries were seen as the cause of their poverty, so in order to modernise, countries needed to follow western and capitalism values (Potter et al., 2008). As a result, Rostow’s five stages of economic growth were emphasised as evolving traditional societies to an industrialised Western styled developed country, in five simple steps (Rostow, 1990). However, critics argue modernisation theory is Eurocentric, does not recognise the complex histories and political relations of the developing world, and argues there is only one way to become modern, which is not the case in reality (Potter et al., 2008). Despite this, it still was a

dominant theory during this time, and is still present in today's view of development (Litonjua, 2012).

At the time of this dominant modernisation perspective, there was also a rise in international youth volunteers. In the late 1940s and throughout the 1950s, young volunteers were involved in the reconstruction of Europe, working on projects all across the continent, which had an underlying focus on cross-border relations (Gillette, 2008). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation created the Coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Services in 1948, to supply aid from Western Europe to the East, and help with the rebuilding of the continent (Gillette, 2008). Independence in Asia, Africa and Latin America also gave rise to volunteer movements within these regions, as young people travelled across borders to help those in need (Gillette, 2008).

In 1960, President Kennedy spoke to a crowd of 10,000 students at the University of Michigan, asking *"How many of you, who are going to be doctors, are willing to spend your days in Ghana? Technicians or engineers, how many of you are willing to work in the Foreign Service and spend your lives travelling around the world?"* (Honore, 2011, p.1). Two weeks later, Kennedy proposed *"a peace corps of talented men and women"* who would dedicate themselves to the progress and peace of developing countries around the world (Honore, 2011, p.1). Through this, a permanent federal agency, the Peace Corps, was approved which aimed to actively involve young Americans in the cause of global democracy, peace, development and freedom (Honore, 2011). Since its inception, over 200,000 volunteers have served in 139 countries, in fields such as education, health, agriculture and environmental protection (Honore, 2011).

In addition, there was the implementation of volunteer type programs in countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada during this time (AVI, 2011). In 1962, the Volunteer Services Abroad (VSA), New Zealand's largest agency working in development, was formed (VSA, 2013a). VSA sent volunteers to work in local schools in Thailand and Samoa, with the idea of improving the social sector (VSA, 2013b; VSA, 2013c). There was also a focus on recruiting young school leavers to volunteer overseas, and there was a realisation these volunteers could make an impact in the developing world

(AVI, 2011). As a result, it became evident there were links between the growth of development and international volunteering.

Modernisation theory also has a number of links with theories of tourism. During the 1960s, tourism was promoted as a development strategy to improve the standard of living in less developed countries (Przeclawski et al., 1993). The transfer of technology, increases in foreign exchange, employment and attraction of development capital were all cited as ways tourism could promote a modern way of life (Harrison, 1992; Sharpley & Telfer, 2002). Although initial studies emphasised the positive economic outcomes, further studies began to question its value (de Kadt, 1979; Jafari, 2001). Theories of tourism began to draw on studies on modernisation, including Rostow's model (Pearce, 1989), but soon recognised the complexity of factors in these processes, including the levels of social and economic development within a country, and the influence of international control (Keller, 1984; Jafari, 2001). As a result, theories of tourism began to recognise the importance of alternative forms of knowledge.

As the idea of development spread across the world, so did young people in the hope of helping others, but also finding themselves in a changing world. However, Australian Volunteer International highlighted how volunteers were given the opportunity to help others on a local scale, and the importance of *“disadvantaged people being in charge of their own development and their potential to create their own future”*, which could be achieved through the process of volunteerism (AVI, 2011, p.8). Consequently, participatory development and international volunteering both grew from the 1980s, as development theorists and practitioners highlighted how development should be concentrated from the bottom up, starting from the local communities (Potter et al., 2008).

### *Participatory Development Theory*

The general view of development became more focused during the 1980s when a new theory came to light, known as alternative development (Potter et al., 2008). This view of development was seen as a critique of modernisation theory, and focused on the local community, the civil society and small scale and appropriate technology (Potter et al., 2008). Rather than a theory, alternative development is made up of a collection of different, but complementary ideas, which focus on principles such as social justice and

environmental sustainability (Potter et al., 2008). A main development practice to come out during this time was participatory development.

Participatory development highlighted the importance of incorporating the community and local scale in the development process (Potter et al., 2008). Freire (1970) emphasises how the poor have an important role in co-defining the means and objectives of any interventions concerning their own development. By using bottom up approaches, it can give the community a sense of ownership of the intervention, and may ensure the relevance of the knowledge provided, thus increasing the probability of sustainable development (Freire, 1970). Robert Chambers, whose work has founded the mainstream practical employment of participatory approaches, emphasises the difference between uppers (the powerful) and lowers (the powerless) (Chambers, 1983; Chambers, 2005). In order to empower the lowers, the uppers must “*relinquish degrees of control themselves*” (Chambers, 2005, p.72). The decentralisation of the power to plan and control the development process, and empower the poor to make them capable of taking their lives into their own hands, is central to the participation paradigm (Chambers, 2005). As a result, there was recognition of the importance of foreign experts listening and learning from locals, rather than implementing their views on the society (Chambers, 2005). Furthermore, with the growth of alternative development there was a growing focus on gender and the environment. Education and awareness are now key aspects surrounding gender equality and sustainable development in governments and organisations around the world (Potter et al., 2008). Through this, there has been a growth in international youth volunteers that complemented the practical application of participatory development.

As western governments and organisations turn their focus to the social and environmental sectors using participatory means, it created opportunities for volunteers. Numerous projects were set up across the world, in parts of Asia, South America and Africa, and many employed international volunteers because of the skills they possessed, which were relatively cheap (Benson, 2010). These projects focused on the wellbeing of the community, on aspects such as health, education, a focus on girls and women, and the environment (Benson, 2010). Consequently, there was a rise in the number of international volunteers around the world at this time (Benson, 2010). A key motivator was altruism and the belief that individuals with the opportunity to help others should do so (Simpson, 2004). This was driven by the focus on developing countries and the means to help them,



by international organisations and charities such as World Vision, and events like Live Aid (Borthwick, 1987).

Theories of alternative tourism have number of links with alternative development and voluntourism. Alternative tourism emphasises the importance of “*small scale, locally-owned developments, community participation, and cultural and environmental sustainability*” (Brohman, 1995, p.65). In recent years, tourism authors have focused on a range of issues within developing countries, including the empowerment of local communities, indigenous development tourism and sustainable tourism development, which have links with participatory development (Sharpley & Telfer, 2002). As the focus on community involvement has evolved, there has been a growing recognition that tourism planning should be guided by the principles of sustainable tourism (Holden, 2000; Cohen & Cohen, 2012). This can be understood as “*tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities*” (United Nations World Tourism Organisation, 2011). Sustainable tourism is a type of tourism that ensures the adverse impacts on the local areas are reduced, in order to be sustained long term (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). However, there has also been a rise of criticism towards the idea of development, volunteering and tourism, which will be explored through a post-development perspective (Cohen & Cohen, 2012).

### *Post-Development Theory*

Despite the growing optimism towards participatory development and subsequently the work of volunteers, there has been a growing criticism for both from a development perspective (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). With regard to participation projects and the influence of tourism, they fail in the aim of reversing top-down power hierarchies, and the power and decision making remains with the implementing (foreign) agency (Sin, 2010; Cohen & Cohen, 2012). Rather than empowering people, it is instead used as a legitimacy device that represents external interests as local needs, and dominant interests as community concerns (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). As a result, participation can actually aggravate people’s situations by disempowering them to challenge the prevailing hierarchies and inequalities in society (Sin, 2010). Local knowledge can also be seen as ineffective if locals view foreign staff as more knowledgeable, and participation can

become a tick box situation where the views are not incorporated into development (Keese, 2011). The criticisms of international volunteers and the similarities that exist with the problems with participatory development will be discussed later in the thesis.

In order to focus on the literature surrounding post-development, the idea of power, which is a key concern, will be discussed first. The general understanding of power is of a capacity of a resource that can be used to influence others, and it can be possessed, shared or lost (Panelli, 2004). However, in order to explore its influence on relationships, it needs to be more accurately defined. Foucault (1980) highlights that power circulates, and therefore individuals are “*always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power*” (p.98). As a result, power is not understood as an object or resource, but rather as a circulation or a web (Panelli, 2004). Consequently, power relationships can be formed between individuals, which can form a resistance – dominance binary (Panelli, 2004). Power can modify social relations and identities, and influence relationships (Panelli, 2004). This may lead to certain discourses being dominant that can lead to unequal power relationships being formed and solidified (Panelli, 2004).

Due to the complex nature of development, theorists have questioned and opposed the views of ‘how to do the right thing for the majority of the world’. As a result, there has been a growing perspective that is referred to as post-development. During the 1990s, there was the emergence of ‘postist’ paradigms (Potter et al., 2008). Firstly, post-modernism rejects the idea of modernisation, and the focus of linear progression (Potter et al., 2008). Instead, it emphasised a shift from universality to diversity and to multiple truths rather than solely one (Marchand & Parpart, 1995). With regard to development, this perspective highlights how one single mode of growth will not yield the same results for a very different selection of countries, contrary to what Rostow’s model highlighted (Nicholson, 2013). Thus, there are a number of different ways to develop and a range of truths that exist in this field (Marchand & Parpart, 1995). Consequently, it can be argued volunteer tourism projects are one of these. By recognising the post-modernism perspective, it becomes evident that volunteer tourism may contribute to development and improvement (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). However, this view also highlights that the outcomes are unlikely to be similar for those involved, and there is the possibility for adverse consequences to be apparent (Sin, 2010). Despite this, by recognising there are different

approaches that can be taken in the implementation of volunteer tourism projects, there is the possibility of negative outcomes being reduced (Sin, 2010; Cohen & Cohen, 2012).

Post-modernism is also related to a second major paradigm, known as post-structuralism (Escobar, 2011). Post-structuralism is a response to the idea of structuralism, which argues human culture can be understood through the means of structures (Escobar, 2011). Authors reject the idea that society can be organised in a specific way, and the certain ways knowledge is constructed and contained in these structures (Parfitt, 2010; Escobar, 2011). Furthermore, there is the rejection of the belief that structures are self-sufficient, as well as argument over the binaries that are often created to constitute these structures (Parfitt, 2010). In terms of volunteer tourism, it is argued that these projects do not influence these structures, and thus are unable to focus on the underlying issues (Conran, 2011). Regardless, by incorporating a postmodernist and participatory approach, it can be argued that local scale projects that focus on the needs and wants of the target audience can lead to improvements in wellbeing and overall development (Parfitt, 2010; Sin, 2010). However, recognition of the underlying structures in place and their likely influence is still needed in order to understand development (Conran, 2011).

The final paradigm is post-colonialism, which argues a dominant Western perspective has perpetuated after the independence of colonies (Potters et al., 2008). Neo-colonialism is viewed as *“the domination of European discourses (such as history, philosophy and ‘development’) and of the European and American forces of capitalism”* (McEwan, 2007, p.124-125). This has been through the dominance of Western knowledge and values around the world, which has created unequal power relationships with the rest of the world. Post-colonialism can be viewed as *“ways of criticising the material and discursive legacies of colonialism”* (Radcliffe, 2005, p.201). Theorists highlight how developing countries were classified as being others; distant, poor and exotic communities that needed help and assistance from the Western world, to show them how to care for their wellbeing themselves and their community (Sin, 2010).

It was emphasised how language and stereotypes created distance and unequal power relationships, and these has been reinforced as the developed world continues to assist developing countries (Benson, 2010). Consequently, the acts associated with development, such as volunteering, can be seen as another form of colonialism (Vodopivec & Jaffe,

2011). This is because there can be similarities made between the foreign volunteers and early colonialists, as well as links between the target audiences of these projects and the colonised, who are exploited for the benefit of those in power (Sin, 2010). These views need to be taken into account when researching in the field of volunteer tourism because of the risk to perpetrate these stereotypes and unequal power relationships (Benson, 2010). However, by recognising they exist and the influence they can have, it is one way to equalise the relationships that exist between the participants involved (Tomazos & Butler, 2012). In order to go into more detail about these postist paradigms in reference to volunteer tourism, the ideas surrounding culture and integration will be discussed next.

### **2.3.3 Culture and Volunteering**

Culture is an important aspect that is related to volunteering and the possible outcomes, and is defined by McEwan (2001) as the following:

*“Cultures are part of everyday life, and are systems of shared meanings that can exist on a number of different spatial scales (local, regional, national, global, among communities, groups or nations). They are embodied in the material and social world, and are dynamic rather than static.”* (McEwan, 2001, p.155).

As a result, cultures change at different rates across time and space, and can be understood as *“maps of meaning through which the world is made intelligible”* (Jackson, 1989, p.1). Furthermore, human culture consists of all the traits acquired by a person through both informal and formal learning processes and cultures are flexible and contested (McEwan, 2001). Cultures provides direction, guidance, rules and limits concerning how humans interpret habitats and environments, and make decisions on how to exploit resources, including each other (Murray, 2006). It is also a process that involves the practising of identities around sets of shared beliefs and values (Murray, 2006).

Multiculturalism describes the coexistence of different cultures, but it does not include connections or interactions between them (Kymlicka, 2003). However, intercultural dialogue refers to relations between cultures, and argues identity, and thus culture, is constructed through the interaction with another subject (Kymlicka, 2003). Therefore, *“we learn about us through relations with others”* (Vodopivec, 2012, p.59). As a result, cultures evolve through interactions with different cultures, which can occur through a

number of processes (Kymlicka, 2003; Murray, 2006). Firstly, cultures can change as a result of acculturation (or hybridisation), which is when one group assumes the trait of another (Murray, 2006). Next, cultural nationalism involves one cultural group asserting its uniqueness in the face of a perceived threat (Murray, 2006). However, a cultural group may also completely change and lose their original traits, known as assimilation (Murray, 2006). Cross cultural fertilisation can occur when positive aspects of two cultures are transferred (Murray, 2006).

Culture is an important factor that is related to volunteer tourism (Coren, 2012). Because foreigners live and work in another country, often with a completely different culture than their own, cultural interaction will occur (Coren, 2012). As a result, volunteers must be aware of culture and cultural difference, and the problems that may arise (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). It is believed there should be understanding between the two different cultures to reduce any issues, and this may determine the success of the project (Benson, 2010). However, if culture is not understood between those involved in the project, there is the possibility of adverse outcomes (Benson, 2010).

The negative impacts related to culture can include reinforcing stereotypes for the host and volunteer, as well as cultural shock for the latter (Coren, 2012). Crossley (2012) highlights how culture shock can occur as a result of intercultural communication. It is the consequence of language difficulties or misunderstanding social interactions in a different environment, and can be caused through simple tasks such as ordering food or communicating with others (Trilokekar, & Kukar, 2011). This can cause discomfort, homesickness, loneliness and depression for the foreigner, and can result in negative feelings towards the host community (Wearing & Grabouski, 2010). Those whom are most likely to experience culture shock are people who live in communities that are socially or culturally different than their own, such as foreign volunteers (Trilokekar, & Kukar, 2011; Crossley, 2012).

#### **2.3.4 Integration and Volunteer Tourism**

The process of integration is related to the idea of culture and is an important aspect related to volunteer tourism (Castles & Miller, 2009). With regards to voluntourism, integration can relate to the underlying goals of volunteer tourism projects, in terms of the connection and understanding formed between the people and places involved in the

project (Benson, 2010). Creating a long lasting connection can be viewed as an overall goal of voluntourism (Benson, 2010). Although integration may only occur in the long term and does not always eventuate, it has links with ideas highlighted in the literature of voluntourism. This theory will be explored later in this thesis, in relation to the case study.

The idea of integration is related to a wider field of sociology, and has roots in the field of migration, anthropology and development (Castles & Miller, 2009). It can be understood in relation to two main theories related to these fields, separation and assimilation, which highlight how a migrant reacts after arriving in a new society (Castles & Miller, 2009).

Separation theory describes the process of the migrant rejecting the dominant or host culture of the new society, in favour of preserving their values, which can also be referred to as cultural nationalism (Castles & Miller, 2009; Wingens et al., 2011). It involves the migrant maintaining ties with their own culture, which can range from language to cultural practices and beliefs, and continuing to live as they did in their previous society (Kleinschmidt, 2006). It can also lead to a rejection of the dominant or host culture, which can mean having no interest in learning the language, cultural beliefs, or general life style in the new society (Wingens et al., 2011). This process can result in the formation of ethnic enclaves, as well as difficulty becoming part of the socio-economic sphere in the new country, and thus being seen as outsiders from that society (Kleinschmidt, 2006).

In comparison, the idea of assimilation is the process of a migrant or group incorporating the cultural and social identities of the host society as their own (Castles & Miller, 2009). This process is determined by the host and migrant, as well as temporal changes, but full assimilation occurs when new migrants become indistinguishable from the wider society (Wingens et al., 2011). This may involve a migrant learning the host language and not maintaining ties with their previous culture, especially across generations (Wingens et al., 2011). It can be argued this process leads to the migrant being perceived as an insider by the society, especially over multiple generations (Castles & Miller, 2009).

The idea of integration can be viewed as a mixture of these two theories. Integration can be understood as the idea of the migrant adopting aspects of the cultural and social identity from the host society, while maintaining their own identity of origin (Kleinschmidt, 2006). It is related to the idea of multiculturalism because it can lead to the mixing of cultures, as well as acculturation, and the formation of new identities (Castles & Miller, 2009).

Integration is also related to multiculturalism in the sense that migrants “*should be able to participate as equals in all spheres of society, without being expected to give up their own culture, religion and language, although usually with an expectation of conformity to certain key values*” (Castles & Miller, 2009, pp.247-248). Consequently, in order to favour integration, and thus create a multicultural society, the role of governments and organisations has been viewed as central components (Wingens et al., 2011). This is achieved by giving migrants the opportunity to learn the language, creating networks and assisting in applying for jobs, but also being able to maintain their origin language and customs (Wingens et al., 2011). Examples include specialist language schools for the children of migrants and migrant centres (Castles & Miller, 2009). Sociologists highlight how socio-economic and cultural aspects are the contributing factors for integration (Portes et al., 2002).

Focusing on the settlement and integration of migrants creates a broader understanding of identity. Identity can be understood in regards to positionality, as a set of distinctive characteristics of a person, or a group of people, in society (Rose, 1997). Consequently, it is strongly linked to aspects of culture (Murray, 2006). A number of countries around the world recognise dual citizenship, which means a migrant can hold citizenship in more than one country because they have connections with different places (Castles & Miller, 2009). In terms of identity, an individual can be associated with multiple places and socio-cultural groups, and can change their identity depending on the situation (Delanty et al., 2006). Consequently, the term dual identity reflects this process of multiple identities existing in one individual, and one can become dominant depending on the situation (Delanty et al., 2006). This in turn influences their connections with the place and people, and is related to the process of integration, and the connections and understanding between those involved is considered to be underlying goals of voluntourism (Delanty et al., 2006). These ideas will be discussed in the following sections, using the case study of AIESEC.

### **2.3.5 Summary**

The global spread of volunteering has grown significantly in the last century. During the late twentieth century, there has been an increase in both volunteering and international tourism, thus contributing to the growth of volunteer tourism (Guttentag, 2009). This increase has followed similar trends of internationalisation, as the flows of information and people have become more globalised. Over the past twenty years, it is estimated that 1.6

million people have participated in volunteer tourism projects each year (Tourism Research and Marketing, 2008). This growth has been supported by the literature. Raymond and Hall (2008) state in *“recent years, there has been a rapid increase in the number of individuals taking part in short-term, organised volunteer tourism programmes”* (p.531), while Young (2008) highlights this sector has growth in both the developed and developing worlds. A Google<sup>TM</sup> search of the terms ‘volunteer tourism’ conducted by Bailey and Russell (2012) generated fifty million hits, *“with sponsored links advertising ‘trips for as low as \$180’ to exotic destinations”* (p.7).

However, it becomes evident that one sole factor has not caused this internationalisation of volunteers. Rather, it is a combination of individual and local factors, as well as national and international processes, which has occurred throughout time. As the processes of colonialism and development has spread around the world, so too have youth volunteers as they fit the practical side these theories are preaching. However, as criticism on development has grown in recent years, the use of international youth volunteers has also come under scrutiny. This has opened up a debate within the field of volunteer tourism, which will be discussed in the next section.

## **2.4 Perspectives of Volunteer Tourism**

Due to the history of volunteering and the changing views towards development and helping others, there is a debate regarding the value of volunteer tourism projects, that centre on the outcomes on all participants involved (Benson, 2010).

### *Potential benefits*

Firstly, foreign volunteers are able to experience a culture often completely different than their own and interact with people from around the world (Chen & Chen, 2011). This gives them a greater sense of global equality and cultural understanding, while also giving them completely new experiences (Chen & Chen, 2011; Kumaran & Pappas, 2011). Volunteers can gain a greater understanding of the people in these countries by *“gaining a sophisticated understanding of the local culture in which they participate, as well as the issues facing their host communities”* (Wearing, 2001; Raymond and Hall, 2008, p.531). Volunteers can gain valuable life skills and practical work experience, both of which will help them in the future, as well as the opportunity to discover and transform themselves



(Benson, 2010). Lepp (2008) highlights how volunteers in Kenya “*developed a new perspective on life at home. They discovered an intrinsic need for meaning and purpose in their lives*” (p.98). Volunteer tourists also can work in projects that focus on the social and environmental wellbeing of a foreign community, which can give the volunteer an altruist attempt to explore one’s self and help others (Coren & Gray, 2012). Furthermore, volunteer tourists may not be viewed as tourists by the local community, and thus are not associated with the negative impacts of tourism (McGehee & Andereek, 2009). Volunteer tourism can also have benefits for the local communities involved in these projects.

The majority of the earlier literature surrounding volunteer tourism highlights the benefits for both the environment and culture of local communities (Sin, 2009; Coren & Grey, 2012). In regards to the environmental benefits, Wearing (2001) states how it brings value to nature and that its underlying aim is on a transition to an ecocentric view of the environment. Furthermore, many projects focus on raising awareness of environmental protection for locals and volunteers alike (Benson, 2010). Broad and Jenkins’ (2008) research on a wildlife conservation volunteer project in Thailand reinforced this, emphasising participants could “*interact with wildlife in a manner that is authentic and meaningful*” (p.72). Raymond and Hall (2008) emphasise how volunteer tourism can lead to increased cross-cultural understanding between local communities and foreigners, through learning different cultures and issues faced by each other. McIntosh and Zahra (2008) who researched a volunteer project in a New Zealand Māori community highlighted how “*volunteer tourism is seen to foster a reciprocal and mutually beneficial relationship between host and guest*” (p.166). Moreover, volunteer tourists come from countries around the globe and develop friendships between one another and locals, which can reduce racial, cultural and social boundaries (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2008; Coren & Grey, 2012). A McGee and Santos (2005) study on previous volunteer tourists revealed relationships between all participants involved can occur through the “*development of networks and consciousness-raising experiences*” (p.764). This can ultimately lead to a sense of global citizenship among all participants (Raymond & Hall, 2008), or “*ambassador[s] of peace*” (Brown and Morrison, 2003, p.74).

### *The criticisms*

Despite the potential benefits of volunteer tourism, there has been a growing opposition as research is focusing more on the types of projects implemented and time frames, as well as

the social and cultural aspects (Raymond & Hall, 2008; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011; Coren & Grey, 2012). Firstly, there is the possibility for negative outcomes on the foreign volunteer. Risks they may face include culture shock, as well as problems associated with the place and travel (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). These may involve illness and safety, as well as different expectations in terms of the project, which could consist of a lack of support from the host and organisation, poor accommodation or aspects of the project the volunteer was not prepared for (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). Callanan and Thomas (2005) argue that volunteers may be primarily interested in personal gain rather than a sense of altruism, while Coghlan (2008) reinforces this by stating *“although there may be an element of altruism that motivates volunteer tourists, there exists an equally, if not stronger, element of self-gratification that drives participation in these projects”* (p.189). However, there is limited academic research in regards to the negative impacts on the foreign volunteer, as the majority of studies focus on the host community.

Early post development literature can take a critical stance on volunteer tourism, and argues that although the individual Western tourist benefits, it is at the expense of the local community (Benson, 2010). More recently, post-structuralist academics are focusing on voluntourism and the post-colonial and power relationships that exist, as well as the adverse implications they can have (Lorimer, 2010; Sin, 2010; Vradi, 2010). It is argued that volunteer tourism may do little to contribute to the well-being of local communities, and rather, it can undermine it (Sin, 2010).

Firstly, the criticism highlights the possible negative implications for the host communities involved in volunteer tourism projects through the post-colonialism paradigm. Volunteer tourism revolves around the idea of a foreigner coming into a country and gaining a position of power over locals, and *“volunteer tourists inappropriately take on roles of ‘expert’ and ‘teacher’ regardless of their experience or qualifications”* (Raymond and Hall, 2008, p.531). Although foreign volunteers can provide skills and expertise to local communities, this may not always been the case with young students going on an exchange (Benson, 2010). Baillie-Smith and Laurie (2011) state how *“young unskilled volunteers are unlikely to offer significant benefits in the global South* (p.553). As a result, the projects may not be completed to a satisfactory level, local employment may be displaced and it may become a burden having volunteers, especially if they cannot speak the local language or must learn new skills (Carey, 2001; Guttentag, 2009). Simpson (2004) highlights how volunteer tourists *“get a level of experience and decision-making which*

*they would not get at home, but [are] also doing things in other people's hospitals and schools that would never be allowed at home"* (Guttentag, 2009, p.544).

Negative outcomes of volunteer tourism can also relate to the idea of colonialism, emphasising the dominance of Western knowledge and the creation of unequal power relationships. Cousins et al. (2009) note how some organisations exploit locals for profit, and Simpson (2004) highlights how certain projects may patronise, trivialise or romanticise poverty as they fail to see the structural factors of inequality, which is responsible for that poverty. This can be through volunteers rationalising poverty as a struggle that locals accept, the idea that *"[poverty] doesn't bother them"* (Simpson, 2004, p.688). It is argued volunteers do not reverse the top down power hierarchies that exists, and do not target the underlying causes of poverty in these communities.

Raymond and Hall (2008) state how volunteer tourism may reinforce and deepen existing stereotypes and dichotomies of 'us and them'. Simpson (2004) highlights how some volunteers *"emphasi[se] difference and establish ... a dichotomy of "them and us" as opposed to finding commonality between the developed and developing world"* (p.688). Simpson (2004) reveals how the simplified imagery of the destination country, coupled with generalisations of culture and a focus on the 'need' of locals creates a *"simple dualism and essentialised concepts of 'other'"* (p.682). A post-colonialist perspective can be used to analyse how volunteer projects are portrayed to foreigners. Simpson (2004) suggests the organisations present *"a geography of homogenous peoples, a geography without history or politics"* (p.683). Furthermore, the communities are portrayed with statements about generalisations on their friendliness, poverty, safety, rich cultural background and need for help (Fee & Mdee, 2010).

Finally, it is becoming to be seen as an experience, for example, that culture is a commodity that can be consumed, photographed, brought home and shown to others. Rather than learn about a new culture, it is argued volunteers may display 'typical tourist behaviour', which involves going out drinking, partying and relaxing (Dalhez & Hampton, 2010). This behaviour may be transferred to local communities, especially youths, which can erode cultures and create tensions with host communities (Guttentag, 2009). Furthermore, projects are being designed in order to fit what the consumer wants (i.e. volunteer) (Cousins et al., 2009; Benson, 2010). This can be seen when voluntourism projects are set up in places where foreigners want to travel to, such as Machu Picchu,

rather than concentrate on where the help is needed, for example in the slums in Lima, Peru.

### *Going forward*

Recognising a post development perspective is important and the findings from this field can be used to improve volunteer tourism projects. Authors do not suggest that these types of projects should be removed completely; rather greater awareness is needed for the negative consequences (Guttentag, 2009). The main suggestions are to ensure the volunteers are appropriate for the project, recognise the importance of developing programs with the local community so as not to undermine staff, and recognise that volunteers need to be exposed to different cultures in order to generate cross-cultural awareness and acceptance (Wearing, 2001; Roberts, 2004; Raymond & Hall, 2008). Raymond and Hall (2008), Kumaran and Pappas (2011), and Vodopivec and Jaffe (2011) also highlight the important role organisations have in the outcomes of volunteer tourism, and it is often their contributions that result in the impacts on the volunteer and local community. This is because many volunteer tourism projects are arranged by an organisation, which advertises the local communities, or matches the foreign volunteer with the project.

By being aware of the possible post development nature of volunteer tourism, authors have noted that programs can foster intercultural exchange without implying notions of ‘others’ (Wearing & Grabowski, 2010). This is through giving the community ownership and power of the programs, thus creating an equal relationship between the volunteers and local community (Wearing & Grabowski, 2010). Raymond and Hall (2008) recommend that sending organisations “*should develop programmes which will be of genuine value for the local communities’, should approach projects’ as a learning process rather than simply an “experience”, and opportunities for interaction with other cultures should be deliberately facilitated*” (p.541). Furthermore, there has been recognition that a broad process of integration may influence the outcomes of the project. However, it has been noted that a greater amount of research on this area is still needed (Benson, 2010; Coren & Gray, 2012).

I believe these findings and recommendations using a post-development lens can be used to improve volunteer tourism projects and recognise the negative outcomes that may become apparent. As a result, the case study will be used to see if these were evident and

the outcomes of them, if they were or were not. In addition, these factors can link to the underlying goals of voluntourism projects, as they relate to creating a better understanding and improving knowledge between the people and places.

## **2.5 Research Aim**

As shown from the discussion, volunteer tourism is a relatively new field of research, but it has a long history related to development. By highlighting the components of volunteering and tourism, it becomes evident that volunteer tourism combines aspects of both, but should be regarded as a separate field. The previous research concentrates on the debate of the outcomes of voluntourism, especially on the participants involved. The current understanding notes that although the main aim is to be beneficial, there are real risks involved, mainly for the target audience. As the research focus on volunteer tourism has become more direct, the ideas surrounding the types of volunteers involved, and the role of the sending organisation and the target audience, have arisen and become central for the success of the projects. However, through this criticism, the current literature emphasises ways to improve these projects.

There is an agreement that appropriate volunteers should be used with the incorporation of the host community, while the interaction of cultures is deliberately facilitated, in order to implement significant volunteer tourism projects. In order to be successful, these should be significant to the participants involved, and relate to the underlying goals of voluntourism, which is a focus on a connection and understanding between the people and place. In order to test this, the views of participants in a selected voluntourism project will be analysed, in relation to the recommendations from the literature, as well as the idea of integration, which will be used as a theory to represent the underlying goals of short term voluntourism projects in the long term.

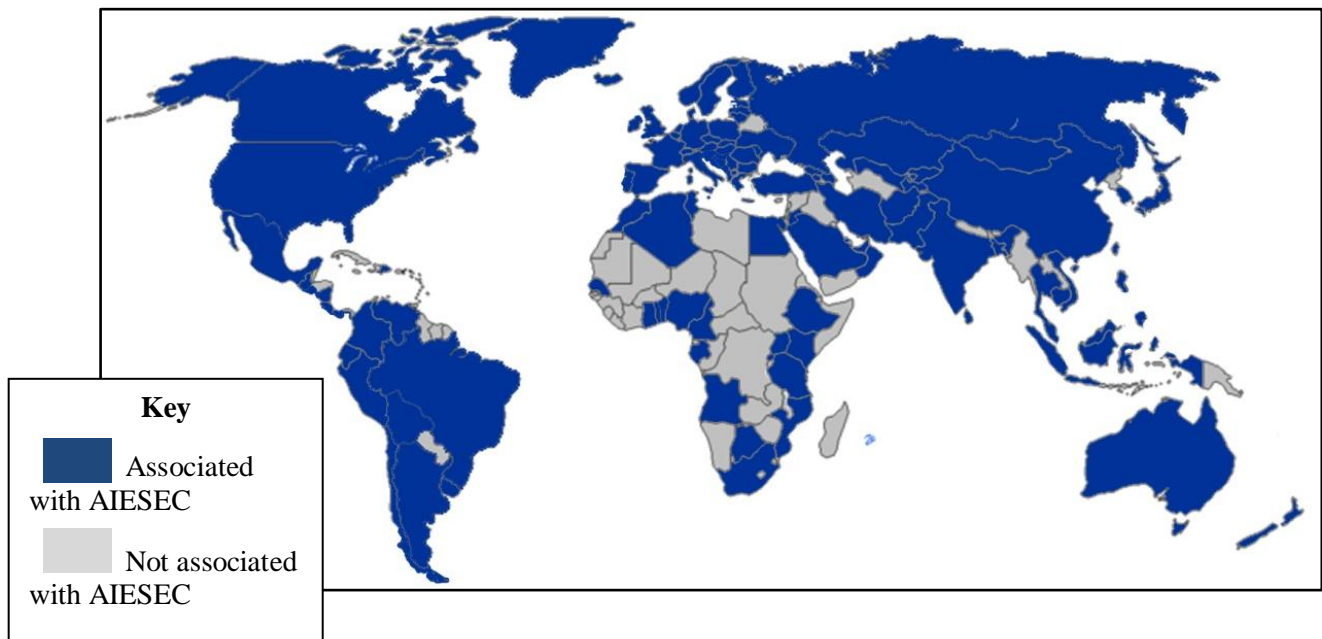
*Research Aim: How do the experiences of voluntourists compare to the underlying goals of voluntourism, in a selected project in Mainland China?*

The case study of this research aim will be discussed in the next chapter.

### Chapter Three: The AIESEC Case Study

AIESEC is an international non-profit organisation that is involved in leadership training and exchange opportunities with different organisations around the globe (AIESEC International, 2008). AIESEC stands for the “*Association internationale des étudiants en sciences économiques et commerciales*”<sup>2</sup> in French, however it is now only referred to by the acronym (AIESEC International, 2008, p.8). It is the world’s largest student run organisation, with over 86,000 members and is currently based in 113 countries and territories (AIESEC International, 2013a). The main aim of the organisation is to send exchange participants around the world to be involved in volunteer projects or internships. Throughout this thesis, the terms foreign volunteer and exchange participant (EP) will be used interchangeably. Map 1 below highlights the diverse range of countries associated with AIESEC, and the countries available for volunteer exchanges.

**Map 1: Countries associated with AIESEC, 2012**



After Source: AIESEC Tanzania, 2012

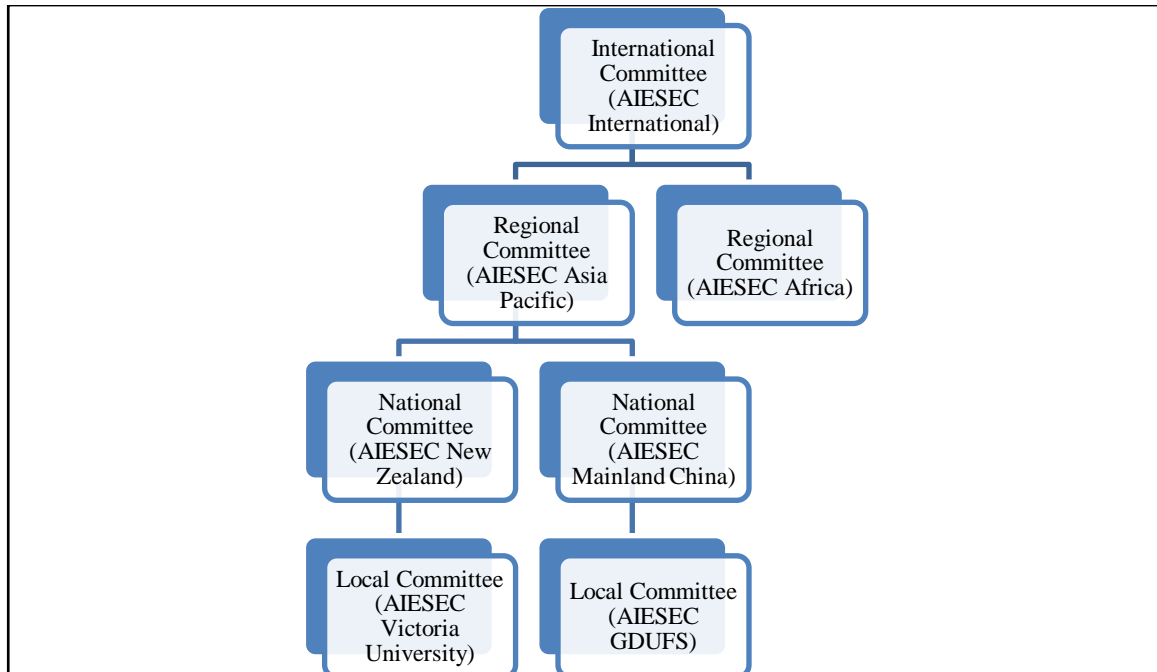
The underlying purpose of AIESEC is to “*empower young people for peace and the fulfilment of humankind’s potential*” and sees itself as an international platform for young people to explore and develop their leadership potential (AIESEC International, 2008, p.2).

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<sup>2</sup> In English this stands for the ‘*International Economic and Commercial Sciences Students Association*’.

AIESEC is divided into different committees at the global, regional, national and local scale, as shown in Figure 1.

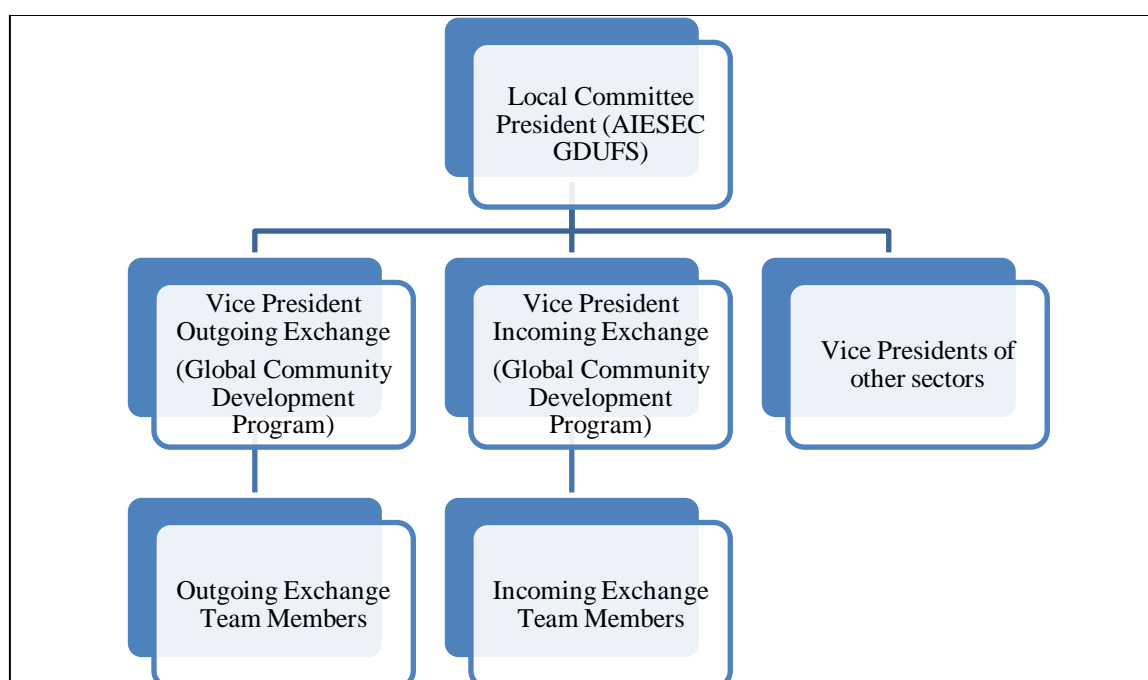
**Figure 1: AIESEC Organisational Structure**



After Source AIESEC International, 2008

Each committee has a residing president and a group of members who work to enable international exchanges between countries. The majority of AIESEC members are volunteers and full time university students. The main language in AIESEC is English, and all members and exchange participants must have a certain level of English. In regards to the exchange department, the Outgoing Exchange Department is responsible for sending volunteers from the origin country, while the Incoming Exchange Department is involved with the volunteer once they have arrived in the destination country. Figure 2 highlights the management structure of AIESEC GDUFS.

**Figure 2: AIESEC Management Structure in AIESEC GDUFS**



After Source: AIESEC International, 2008

The Outgoing Exchange Department is involved in promoting and recruiting potential volunteers, and will help them to find a suitable project in the destination country. Communication and feedback between this department and their volunteers is a key aspect. Furthermore, the Incoming Exchange Department is responsible for giving support to the foreign volunteer, including finding a place for them to live, picking them up from the airport, showing them around the city, helping during the project and giving them assistance when required. This process involves consultation between the departments and volunteers to make sure the project fulfils the expectations and requirements of both.

AIESEC is based in over 2,400 universities around the world and is supported by over 8,000 partner organisations (AIESEC International, 2013a). AIESEC sends over 20,000 students and recent graduates on international exchanges each year in order to give the foreign volunteers the opportunity to live and work in a foreign country (AIESEC International, 2013a). Projects are organised by local committees to ensure control over the projects and that exchange participants are involved at the local level. The members of the local committee are often in charge of, and involved in, the projects themselves. AIESEC often partners with non-Governmental organisations (NGOs) or companies who are willing to use international volunteers, or will assist in funding the projects.



The majority of exchange participants go to developing countries and work on local scale projects in the social sector, including education and wellbeing. Exchange participants have to pay a fee to AIESEC, which varies by country, as well as pay for flights, insurance and visas. Nevertheless, some projects offer free or a reduced price for accommodation and/or free meals.

### *History of AIESEC*

AIESEC was officially founded in 1948, but the idea for the organisation was formed during the 1930s when schools across Europe exchanged students through various programs (AIESEC International, 2008). After World War Two, a new generation of leaders were needed to help in the rebuilding of their countries. The previous idea of exchanging students expanded to one that would focus on developing the youth and alleviate tensions between countries (AIESEC International, 2008). The organisation aimed to give students the opportunities to gain leadership skills and cultural understanding, through the facilitation and participation in an international work exchange program (AIESEC International, 2008). During the late 1950s, AIESEC expanded to the United States and was set up at Yale University and Columbia Business School, and continued to expand throughout Europe (AIESEC International, 2008). By the end of 1960, there were approximately 2,500 exchanges, while over 4,000 by the end of 1970, as AIESEC expanded to Africa and South America, then throughout the world (AIESEC International, 2008).

### *AIESEC Today*

As AIESEC grew, it began highlighting important themes that would eventually serve as a guideline for the various international, regional and local seminars and conferences it held, as well as the exchange programs it organised. These included leadership, management, leadership, sustainable development, the environment, entrepreneurship and gender (AIESEC International, 2013a). As a result of this focus, the majority of AIESEC exchange projects that last six to eight weeks in developing countries can be classified into a number of key categories. Two of the main projects focus on culture and the environment:

## Cultural Exchange

These projects focus on sharing culture between the local community and foreign volunteers. This can involve each party giving presentations about aspects of their culture, and teaching each other dances, songs and how to make certain foods, which are culturally important, with a focus on teaching English (for example Explore China).

## The Environment

These projects focus on raising awareness of the environment in local schools and communities. There is a focus on improving the local environment, as well as teaching English (for example Green Power Now).

## *Selection Process*

For foreigners to be matched to an AIESEC project, it often involves a lengthy process through the organisation. The Outgoing Exchange Department advertises exchanges throughout the university it is based in, with the use of posters, presentations and event days. Next, a student signs up on the AIESEC website and the organisation arranges a discussion with the student. Afterwards, the student has an interview, and if he/she is accepted, they can go on an exchange. In order to find the projects available, AIESEC uses a website, [www.myaiesec.net](http://www.myaiesec.net), where exchange participants can see what types of projects are available, in which cities and for how long. The Incoming Exchange Department can also search for exchange participants whom they believe could be interested in the project. Potential exchange participants also put up their relevant work and education information, and upload their curriculum vitae, as well as their preferences for the project and location.

Exchange participants and the Incoming Exchange Department then contact one another through email, asking to be matched. If both agree to the project and volunteer, a Skype interview is organised. If the department agrees to use the volunteer, and the volunteer agrees to participate, they both become matched. Next, relevant forms are sent to the volunteer, local committee the volunteer is associated with, and the local committee the volunteer will go to. Finally, the volunteer organises the plane tickets, visa and insurance.

Each local committee also organises an outgoing preparation seminar to prepare students who are sent overseas. These focus on AIESEC as an organisation, as well as helping them to set up the exchanges. Issues such as culture shock, homesickness, possible challenges

students may face when living and working abroad, and practical travel concerns are addressed with the help of members of AIESEC and former exchange participants. These are to help ensure exchange participants, as well as the community they are going to, can benefit from the process, and to reduce any possible adverse impacts. Furthermore, incoming exchange seminars are also organised in the receiving countries and deal with similar issues. There are also events about the country, in terms of lifestyle and culture, to help transition foreigners, as well as AIESEC buddies to help the exchange participants adjust to the new environment.

### **3.1 Voluntourism in Mainland China**

Mainland China is a geographical and political term that is used to describe the geopolitical area of the People's Republic of China, as shown in Map 2 below (Mainland China News, 2013). However, for this thesis, this term does not cover the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau, or Taiwan (Republic of China) (Mainland China News, 2013). The term Mainland China is used because it is used by AIESEC. The estimated population is over 1.350 billion, and its largest city in terms of population is Shanghai, followed by Beijing, Tianjin, Guangzhou and Shenzhen (LIFEI & PENG, 2011; SACU, 2012).

**Map 2: Province Map of the People's Republic of China**



After Source: SACU, 2012

In recent years there has been a rise in students and graduates volunteering in Mainland China (Shao et al., 2011). This has been due to a series of factors, both internally and externally. Since the 1980s, China has been opening up to the world, which has led to a growth in tourism, foreign investment and migration throughout the country (Chang, 2008; Zong, 2012a). This has helped to fuel job and volunteer opportunities for foreigners, often with a specific focus on teaching English (Boyle, 2000). It is often believed that a student would gain greater opportunities if they learnt English, and students currently begin to learn at age seven at school in most provinces (Chang, 2008; Zong, 2012b). This has opened up job opportunities for foreigners who can speak English, as teachers or private tutors (Boyle, 2000). Consequently, volunteer positions are growing in popularity, and many advertise for students or recent graduates (Liu & Luo, 2013). These are often arranged by local organisations, who offer short or long term teaching positions in schools in China, for foreigners with degrees (Boyle, 2000; Chang, 2008). AIESEC Mainland

China is one example of an organisation that is involved in the process of voluntourism in this country.

### *AIESEC in Mainland China*

AIESEC in Mainland China was first established in 1998 when members of AIESEC Germany, as well as from Japan and Hong Kong, helped to set up local committees in the country (Lam, 2009). Since 2008, AIESEC Mainland China has sent the highest number of volunteers overseas globally, and in 2012 it implemented over 1,200 AIESEC projects throughout the country (AIESEC International, 2013b). The majority of these projects focus on cultural sharing, environmental awareness and teaching English (AIESEC International, 2013b). AIESEC is currently has over 30 local committees throughout Mainland China, and a main committee is AIESEC GDUFS, based in Guangzhou.

### **3.2 AIESEC GDUFS, Guangzhou**

Guangzhou (formerly known as Canton) is the capital and largest city of the Guangdong province in southern China, the largest province in terms of population with over 100 million (Lu, 2012). Guangzhou had a population of over 12 million, and is a key transportation hub and trading port, trading internationally from the 1970s (Schwartz, 1982; Lu, 2012). Although Mandarin, the official language of the People's Republic of China, is spoken in Guangzhou, the main dialect is Cantonese in this city, which is spoken by over half of the population (Chang, 2008; Lu, 2012).

Guangzhou also has a number of similarities related to the six main features of place for volunteer tourism; *“safety, need, attractiveness of place, presence of local partner organisations, previous ... personal contacts and accessibility”* (Keese, 2011, p.265, 267). Guangzhou is the fourth largest city in China and is known as a safe location and is a popular destination for tourists and international companies (Chang, 2008). In terms of accessibility, there is a large public transport system involving the metro and buses, which are convenient and relatively cheap. It also has an international airport and a number of universities. In terms of English teaching and environmental protection, there is a demand for increased awareness, especially in middle and high schools (Chang, 2008). There are two AIESEC local committees in Guangzhou, and both have been running for five years,

and thus have a number of connections with the wider community, as well as current and past members.

### *AIESEC GDUFS*

The specific AIESEC local committee that will be used as a case study in this thesis is the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies (GDUFS) Local Committee. The committee has the same name as the university it is based in Guangzhou. It has been running for five years, and currently offers four Global Community Development Programs projects, Explore China, Green Power Now and Winter/ Summer Camp, at various times of the year. A large proportion of students involved in AIESEC GDUFS are from Guangzhou or nearby cities in Guangdong. However, there are some from other parts of China as well. Since 2009, there has been a steady growth in local projects and Chinese volunteers sent overseas, and this is expected to continue. In 2012, AIESEC GDUFS sent the fourth highest number of volunteers overseas in Mainland China, and implemented 39 projects (AIESEC International, 2013b).

The reason I selected AIESEC GDUFS for my thesis was due to my already established relationship with the AIESEC members. During the previous year, I volunteered in the Green Power Now project through this committee, and I was able to learn more about AIESEC in Mainland China. During my exchange, there were approximately 15 foreign exchange participants in Guangzhou doing different projects, as well as a large number of AIESEC members. This was mainly because the exchange occurred at the end of the year, as more projects were being run at this time. While I was in Guangzhou, I had a number of discussions with AIESEC members about my potential thesis research, and I received positive feedback. As a result, my thesis focused on the Green Power Now project due to my established connections, familiarity with the project and city, and due to the large numbers of participants in the previous exchange.

### **3.3 Green Power Now**

This thesis will focus on a specific AIESEC project called GPN. The main goal for this project is to raise environmental awareness of middle and high schools students in Guangzhou. This is done by foreign volunteers organising classes with the teachers and

AIESECers to teach students about environments at risk and what can be done in order to improve them. The project that is used for this thesis ran from 13 May 2013 to 19 June 2013.

There were three official foreign volunteers of the GPN project. A male and female were from India, as well as the author, and all were aged between 19 and 22 years old, and were university students. Two of them had background experience in teaching, with a focus on English, and had worked with children before, while all of them had an interest in the environment. For the two students from India, this was their first time in China, and they had not worked overseas previously. One other foreigner was involved in the GPN project, a male from India who was 18 years old. He attended the classes for one week and was a volunteer of the Explore China project. Because the author was involved in this project as well as researching it, the majority of the expectations and outcomes on the foreign volunteers are from the other participants. The author of this thesis also participated in the project.

In total there were five AIESEC members involved in the GPN project, including one Team Leader. All members went to the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies and their degrees related to business management and English. The Team Leader had previous experience in AIESEC as a member of GPN last year, while the rest were new members. However, they all had some experience in teaching, with a number teaching English to rural communities in Guangzhou. Furthermore, there were five AIESEC members and buddies that were involved with the project, and they were also university students in Guangzhou. All AIESEC members included in this thesis volunteered in this organisation and were full time university students.

### **3.5 Green Power Now and Voluntourism**

As highlighted in the academic literature, there are a number of classifications for volunteers and voluntourism projects. The following table compares the classifications of a volunteer to the participants in the GPN project.

**Table 2: The Exchange Participant and AIESEC Member Classifications of a Volunteer**

<b>Classification</b>	<b>AIESEC Exchange Participant</b>	<b>AIESEC Member</b>
The actions of those involved must be voluntary, and done in accordance with the actor's free will.	It was the exchange participant's choice to go on an exchange, and it involves volunteering in a project.	It was the AIESEC member's choice to join this organisation, and all involvement is voluntary.
The activity involves an amount of decision making, rather than a reactive action for assistance or emergency help.	The exchange involved decision making because it took a number of months to successfully go through the selection process of an AIESEC exchange.	It took a number of weeks to successfully join AIESEC as a member, which involved a significant amount of decision making.
The activity must occur over a period of time, from weeks to years, rather than a one-time event.	Exchange participants generally volunteer for approximately six to eight weeks.	AIESEC members can join for one term (generally two months), and many continue involvement throughout their university study and years following.
The decision occurs without the expectation of reward (in monetary terms) or punishment, and is based on personal ambitions.	Exchange participants received no monetary reward, but did gain a number of intangible benefits by volunteering.	AIESEC members received no monetary reward, but did receive intangible benefits.
The activity focuses on providing people or causes that desire help. As a result, it is not imposed, but should be willingly requested or accepted by recipients.	The main goal of the participant was to improve the wellbeing of local school students.	AIESEC worked closely with the schools to ensure the focus of the project, and that the help was accepted by the audience.
Volunteerism is performed on the behalf of people or causes, and is often through organisations or agencies.	Participants volunteered through AIESEC, who works closely with the target audience to match foreign volunteers to the projects.	AIESEC is an organisation that focuses on matching foreign volunteers to volunteer projects in the local community.

Source: Adapted from Snyder & Omoto, 2008, pp.2-3

As shown, the GPN projects, as well as the foreign volunteers and AIESEC members, have links with voluntourism and can be classified as such. In addition, the current understanding of volunteer tourism also highlights a number of characteristics for the volunteer, the sending organisation and the target audience. The following table summarises these characteristics and compares them to the features of the AIESEC project.



**Table 3: Volunteer Tourism and the AIESEC Exchange**

<b>Volunteer Tourism</b>	<b>AIESEC Exchange</b>
<b>The Volunteer</b>	<b>Exchange Participant</b>
Fulfilment of the ‘characteristics of a volunteer’	✓
Received a reduction in accommodation or food costs	✓
Needed to pay the sending organisation a fee	✓
Aged between 18 to 25 and are university students or recent graduates	✓
From the developed world	One from New Zealand
<b>Volunteer Tourism: The Sending Organisation</b>	<b>AIESEC</b>
Based in, or are an NGO, private company, charity, university or government.	✓
The project involves teaching English, environmental protection, social services etc.	✓
The project is located in the developing world	Although China can be argued to be a developing country, Guangzhou is seen as a developed city
The project is located in a place of interest	✓
The project is based in another country than the volunteers are from	✓
A focus on the project, but also on tourism	✓
<b>The Target Audience</b>	<b>The Local Schools</b>
A focus on the wellbeing of the community.	✓
The help is wanted	✓

Source: Adapted from Benson, 2010

Due to these similarities and links with the literature, the GPN project organised by AIESEC was selected as a suitable case study for this thesis.

### 3.4 Summary of AIESEC

There are a number of similarities AIESEC has with the studies on volunteer tourism. Firstly, both have an underlying goal that focuses on the “*combination of development work, education and tourism*” (Keese, 2011, p.258). There are similarities between AIESEC and a typical not for-profit NGO involved in volunteer tourism, because they both set up international exchanges for volunteers. The types of projects they advertise are similar, concentrate on aspects such as education, health and the environment, and the local community aspect is recognised as central to the success of the project.

An AIESEC case study was chosen because of the connection with this organisation, as well as its similarities to volunteer tourism projects. The GPN project also implements the key recommendations suggested by the literature, using appropriate participants, incorporating the host community and cultural exchange. However, this case study also gives insight into the effectiveness of these suggestions, the process of integration, and the links to the wider field on volunteer tourism. In order to do this, the following chapter will discuss the methodology of the thesis.

## Chapter Four: Methodology

It is argued if volunteer tourism is promoted and implemented in a way that “*maximises the experience for the volunteer while preserving the dignity and culture of its beneficiaries [it] can potentially contribute enormously to the host region* (McGehee & Andereck, 2009, p.42). Through this argument, there is the potential for volunteer tourism projects to benefit the participants involved, and for “*both host and volunteers to walk away from [the] ... experience with a better understand[ing] of each other*” (McGehee & Andereck, 2009, p.42). This depends on the project itself, and if it is considered to be successful by the participants involved. However, more research is needed in the relatively new field of voluntourism, which this thesis aims to do.

### 4.1 Research Aim and Questions

As discussed in the literature review, there is a discussion on the outcomes of volunteer tourism projects. This thesis aims to focus on the underlying goals of voluntourism, which is, creating a meaningful connection and understanding between the people, as well as being significant to those involved. In order to focus on this aim, four research questions will be discussed with reference to the AIESEC case study. Firstly, the expectations and motivations of the voluntourists and sending organisation will be identified, in order to give insight into the reasons they participated in the project. Following this, the second research question focuses on if these participants considered the project to be significant, by comparing their outcomes to their expectations. The third research question focuses on the recommendations for achieving the underlying goals of voluntourism, and linking them with the case study with reference to the first two questions. The final research question attempts to answer the research aim, linking these findings with the underlying goals of voluntourism, which are represented by the long term process of integration. Following this will be a discussion of voluntourism in light of these findings.

Research Aim: *How do the experiences of voluntourists compare to the underlying goals of voluntourism, in a selected project in Mainland China?*

This aim is further broken down into the following research questions:

1. What were the expectations and motivations of the voluntourists and sending organisation?
2. Was the project considered to be significant to the voluntourists and sending organisation?
3. What were the recommendations to achieving this goal, and were these evident in the case study?
4. How may these experiences of a short-term voluntourism project relate to the underlying goals of voluntourism projects?

Due to the focus of this thesis on the participants involved in volunteer tourism projects, it is important to discuss the relevant epistemology, methodology and methods which have been used.

## **4.2 Epistemology**

The general understanding of epistemology is the study of knowledge and justified belief (Seebohm, 2007). Epistemologies highlight how knowledge is produced, how it can be used, and from whom and where knowledge is drawn from (Seebohm, 2007). Consequently, this understanding can influence how issues are framed and discussed, and the findings, solutions or recommendations that arise (Seebohm, 2007). As a result of the spread of Western views around the globe, a discourse that focuses on one truth, while disregarding the others, has often been inadvertently incorporated and can be seen as dominant in research (Seebohm, 2007). This thesis will go against this viewpoint, and base the research on a perspective that recognises the importance of alternative and local forms of knowledge (Seebohm, 2007). Consequently, there will be an underlying historical-hermeneutic science framework throughout the research so a qualitative methodology can be used (Seebohm, 2007; Özerdem & Bowd, 2013). As a result, there will be a strong focus on the perspectives of those involved in the research, as well as a strong focus on participation throughout each stage of this thesis (Özerdem & Bowd, 2013).

## **4.3 Methodology**

Due to the nature of the research for this thesis, a qualitative methodology will be used. A

qualitative methodology was chosen for this topic because the research questions focus on the participant's perspective and the outcomes of being involved in the volunteer tourism project (Özerdem & Bowd, 2013). The previous literature in this field also has a strong background in this methodology, with a focus on the views of participants (Benson, 2010). According to the ideas of Freire (1970) and Chambers (2005), a participatory research framework allows the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of a topic, can highlight the complexity that exists between the people involved in the research, and the often subjective nature of the findings. In order to go into detail about the methods used in this thesis, the ethics involved and my positionality will be highlighted first.

#### **4.4 Ethics**

Due to the participatory nature of the thesis, conducting research ethically is central. The importance that ethics has on research has grown significantly in recent decades (Özerdem & Bowd, 2013). In terms of the research, Human Ethics consent for this thesis was submitted to the Human Ethics Committee through Victoria University and was accepted prior to beginning research on 30 May 2013. All participants were given an information sheet, consent form and a copy of the questions. A copy of these forms can be found in Appendix One. It was entirely up to the participant to be involved in this research, and anyone could elect to be removed from the study at any time prior to compiling the data. With regard to the findings, the identity of all participants has been kept confidential and anonymous, only using characteristics that are relevant to the discussions. This was to protect them from any potential harm and repercussions from any comments during the research phase. These could have been about the project, other participants or the wider country and government.

The original focus on my thesis was to focus on the outcomes on the target audience, i.e. the school students and wider community. This would have involved surveys and focus groups with the students, teachers and parents. However, it was later decided to use AIESEC as a means to interact with the students and parents, due to the connections and discussions that had already taken place, in relation to organising the project. I had a number of discussions with AIESEC about my thesis, and informed the students and teachers about the research on the project, and would use the project feedback forms as a way to measure the student's perspectives of the project. However, it was decided against

using this information in the thesis because the form of collecting these findings may not reflect accurate answers. Instead, the general ideas and discussions with AIESEC, students and teachers will be used to inform the results. Consequently, the focus of the thesis is to the foreign volunteers and AIESEC members.

A key factor involved in ethical research is being aware of cultural, health and safety issues in the field. During my time in Guangzhou, I spoke limited Mandarin and Cantonese, so relied on the AIESEC members to provide translations. Despite all members having a required level of English, not being able to communicate in their native language would likely affect their answers, so would influence the findings. This is a factor I had to take into account during the analysis of the findings.

In addition, the formation of close relationships is an important aspect of ethical research. As highlighted previously, I began to form these relationships and building my knowledge of voluntourism projects before beginning my thesis. In 2011, I went on a development internship through AIESEC to Bandung, Indonesia, and volunteered in an HIV/AIDS organisation for three months. I wanted to work in Indonesia because I have lived and travelled around Southeast Asia throughout my lifetime, and wanted to gain a greater experience than what could be offered as a tourist, as well as gaining practical work experience. I had decided to focus on HIV/AIDS because it was related to my interests in human geography and development studies.

In 2012, I began a Master's Degree in Development Studies at Victoria University of Wellington, and decided to focus on volunteer tourism for my thesis topic in 2013. In order to gain contacts, build relationships and gain a better understanding of the AIESEC projects, I volunteered in the GPN project in Guangzhou from November to December 2012. I decided to do this project because I have a background in environmental studies and I enjoy teaching. While I was in Guangzhou and after returning to New Zealand, I discussed the possibility of focusing on GDUFS for my thesis with the AIESEC in Guangzhou and Wellington, and this was agreed. In order to undertake the research for my thesis, I decided to volunteer in the GPN project again, as this meant I was involved in all aspects of the project, which also contributed to the collection of the data.

## **4.5 My Positionality**

In order to express my views on the ideas in this thesis, and also so the reader can understand my perspectives on the fields of study I cover, it is important that I discuss my positionality (Özerdem & Bowd, 2013). According to Rose (1997) and Chacko (2004), positionality refers to aspects of identity, such as race, class and gender, which can determine how an individual is portrayed in society by one's self and/or by others. Certain attributes can be more relevant in particular circumstances, as well as with different groups (Chacko, 2004). As a result, a person's positionality, and how that individual and others perceive it, are context specific, and changes over time and place (Chacko, 2004).

The fundamental, yet often very defining, characteristics of positionality are those which are most apparent; a person's appearance. I would describe my appearance as a tall male European New Zealander. With regard to my research, and the fact that it is in Mainland China, my appearance took on a new significance in the society I was in, and I needed to be aware of this. From my experiences, I am automatically regarded as a foreigner in China based on my appearance alone, and this created the perception that I was an outsider and foreigner. In addition, my level of Mandarin and Cantonese restricted my interactions with the wider community. Consequently, my positionality influenced how I was perceived and treated in society in Guangzhou, and this was an important factor related to my thesis.

As a result of my AIESEC exchanges, I have gained a unique perspective on AIESEC and the exchange process. I have become close friends with the members of AIESEC involved with organising the project, as well as those in different projects, the other foreign volunteers and the target community I was involved with, and still keep in contact with a number of them. I believe this will give me an experienced viewpoint during my research, as I am not completely regarded as an outsider. It also made me aware of the cultural, health and safety issues and the risks involved in the research. However, I am not completely impartial regarding AIESEC and the success of the project, so my opinion is more directed on improving these projects. Through my experiences in relation to volunteer tourism, I have developed a certain viewpoint on the debate surrounding this field. I believe projects that use foreign volunteers to focus on a local community can be

beneficial for all involved. However, there are real risks for adverse outcomes for all members involved, and this needs to be recognised. As a result, I believe there are ways to improve these projects to reduce the risks involved, as well as being beneficial for all participants involved.

#### **4.6 Methods**

Due to the epistemology and framework of this thesis, there was a focus on qualitative methods of gathering the data (Özerdem & Bowd, 2013). However, a key method used throughout the time I was in Guangzhou was participant observation. This was because I was involved in the project and I was therefore able to participate in each aspect, as well as interact with all participants, that gave me a number of insights into it. During my time there, I was involved in weekly or daily discussions with other voluntourists, AIESEC members, school teachers and my homestay, in which aspects related to my research were discussed. As highlighted, all were aware of my research, and I only took notes after asking, which they could review. Despite this, I also used other methods with each participant group to gain a greater understanding of the underlying research questions.

##### *Volunteer Tourists*

With regard to the volunteer tourists involved in the project, the main method of research was discussions and focus groups. This was because I worked closely with the volunteers, as I was a volunteer as well, and there were a number of instances of discussions regarding aspects of the project. For all discussions, I made notes after gaining permission, which they could review. I also conducted an informal interview with the two volunteers and asked another involved with AIESEC to fill out a survey, with a specific focus on their expectations, outcomes and experiences of the exchange as a whole. I discussed my research thesis with all volunteers at the beginning of the project, obtained verbal consent from them, and gave them the information sheet and consent form prior to the informal interview and emailed questions.



### *AIESEC Members*

The main research method with the members of AIESEC for my thesis was discussions. Upon arriving in Guangzhou, I went to a meeting with the members involved in the GPN and discussed my research with them and gained verbal consent. Throughout the project, I had a number of discussions and informal focus groups with various members about the project, and took notes after gaining permission. I also emailed a survey to members of AIESEC as it was decided by the members that this was more suitable than organising interviews with all of them, due to time constraints. I gave out the information sheet and consent forms near the beginning of the project, prior to sending out these emails.

### *Literature Review*

The information regarding the literature review was mainly found using the Victoria University of Wellington Library search engine, which gives access to journal articles and books for post-graduate students. Other literature was found through other courses at this university, and through websites on volunteer tourism. The information about AIESEC was found through the use of the main AIESEC website ([www.myaiesec.net](http://www.myaiesec.net)) and the various databases it has. It was also gathered through personal experience with this organisation, and discussions with members.

## **4.7 Data Analysis**

With regard to the data analysis, a manual method was used. During my time in Guangzhou I made notes of the informal discussions and participant observations, while the surveys and translated questionnaires were already electronic. In order to keep the views and perspectives of the individual's anonymous and confidential; a coding system has been used for quotes. In total, ten AIESEC members agreed to participate in this research (A1 – A10), as well as three foreign volunteers (V1 – V3).

Once I had all the findings as an electronic copy, I went through them manually to highlight common ideas and relationships that may exist, and use this as a means to answer the research questions posed (Özerdem & Bowd, 2013).

#### **4.8 Research Feedback**

Because a main aim of the thesis is to contribute to AIESEC GDUFS and the participants involved in the project, it is essential feedback is given (Özerdem & Bowd, 2013). Since returning to New Zealand, I have kept in contact with the participants involved in the project through Chinese social media and email, and they have an option to receive email updates during the writing stage of the thesis (July to February 2014), and/or an electronic copy of the thesis once it has been submitted and marked. During the research phase, I received a number of suggestions for the focus of this thesis from the participants involved, which were incorporated in the findings.

## **Chapter Five: Findings from Guangzhou**

This chapter will highlight the findings gathered from the Green Power Now project, with a specific focus on the research questions posed. Following this, the expectations and motivations of each group, plus their expectations of the other groups, will be highlighted with a key focus on the job description given to everyone. In order to present these findings, the expectations and motivations have been divided into four main categories. These are the project itself, social relationships, cultural exchange and finally, personal development. The final part of this section will focus on the outcomes of all participants involved, and these will be further divided into the four main categories to present clearer findings.

### **5.2 Research Question One**

*1) What were the expectations and motivations of the voluntourists and sending organisation?*

In order to explore this question in depth, there will be a brief introduction to the GPN project, followed by the expectations of the foreign volunteers and AIESEC members.

The Green Power Now project began on 13 May and lasted until 19 June 2013. It involved two classes per week, one at the Hengfu Middle School and one at the Tianhe Middle School. The Hengfu classes focused on a range of environmental issues each week, including waste classification, pollution and recycling. The Tianhe classes also focused on these environmental issues, but also on cultural exchange between foreign countries and China. There were approximately 40 students in each class, with the teachers being present in most of the classes. The classes were conducted in English and translated into Mandarin by the AIESECers when necessary.

When each foreign volunteer arrived in Guangzhou, they were greeted by members of AIESEC GDUFS and taken to their home stay. They either lived in an apartment with a student of a local university or stayed in a private room with a local family in an apartment and accommodation was provided free of charge. Meals were either eaten with the home stay or at local restaurants, and the home stays often showed the foreigners around the city. They stayed with their home stay for six weeks (the designated duration of the project), but

then moved into a hostel for the remainder of their stay in Guangzhou, which was less than two weeks.

As well as the classes, the GPN project also involved two additional events. The first one was the Green Cup, which involved students from different middle and high schools entering a competition and presenting an environmentally focused proposal that focused on key issues in Guangzhou. There were approximately two hundred in the audience, including teachers, students, AIESEC members, foreign volunteers, NGO members and members of the public. The other event organised for the GPN project was the Global Village. This event was organised by AIESEC and the main focus was to show Chinese and foreign cultures to the other foreign volunteers, members of AIESEC and the wider public. It involved all foreigners preparing a table with images, gifts, food and flags from their country. It also included performances about Chinese culture, including a performance on a traditional Chinese musical instrument, a calligraphy show and a tea drinking performance.

Finally, the foreign volunteers of the GPN project were also invited to join weekly city tour events around Guangzhou. These were organised by members of AIESEC and involved going on a day trip to selected historical, cultural and touristic locations in the city. A number of AIESEC members accompanied the foreigners during these trips.

### *Job Description*

Prior to agreeing to join GPN, the foreign volunteers were given the job information that was designed by AIESEC members about the project. This information was created through a number of discussions with the target schools, as well as recommendations from the previous GPN projects. Consequently, the job description can be used as an indicator for the expectations of all participants involved in the project, as each group agreed to the criteria. A copy that has been modified to include all the information can be seen in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: Job Description of the Green Power Now Project**

**Project Focus**

- 1) Provide a wide stage for students (middle school) to learn basic environmental information in order to let students understand the concept of protecting the environment and apply what they learn into practice. Give students the opportunity to practice presentation skills and oral English. Furthermore, students can inform others about what they have learnt.
- 2) The exchange participants join in activities that are held by AIESEC GDUFS with the local community, which gives them the opportunity to learn about Chinese culture and customs, especially Cantonese (local culture in Guangzhou). Exchange participants are expected to be involved in the Green Cup and Global Village events, as well as other events organised by AIESEC GDUFS.
- 3) The exchange participants will cooperate with AIESEC members in terms of designing teaching courses related to the environment and organising extracurricular activities. They will also have the opportunity to enhance their ability of expressing themselves, organising activities and becoming a leader, as well as interacting with like-minded foreigners and locals.
- 4) Review and evaluate the project and what the exchange participant has experienced.

**Measureable Results**

- 1) At least 80 percent of students attend these classes, and exchange participant co-operate with two middle schools and the wider community, while attending all the classes.

**Preparation**

- 1) The exchange participants are expected to have basic knowledge of environmental protection, have basic teaching skills, good communication skills, good computer skills, capability to adapt to cultural differences and prepare work needed for the classes.

This job description highlights what is expected of the foreign volunteers during the course of the project, but also emphasises the expectations the members of AIESEC and the schools have of the foreign volunteers, and the project as a whole. The next section will focus on the expectations and motivations of the foreign volunteers and AIESEC members, including the expectations each group has of one another.

### 5.3.1 Expectations and Motivations of the Foreign Volunteers

The foreign volunteers have an important role in the structure of the overall project, and their expectations and motivations for participating in an exchange can influence the success and outcomes of the project. In order to explore their underlying reasons for volunteering in Guangzhou, their expectations and motivations have been divided into four main categories; those related to the project itself, the social relationships, cultural exchange and finally those related to personal development. In addition, the volunteer's preparations for the project as well as their concerns coming to Guangzhou have been noted. Following this, the expectations they have of the other foreign volunteers, the members of AIESEC as well as the schools, are highlighted.

#### *Preparation*

Due to the process of applying for the project, the volunteers spent a significant amount of preparing for the exchange, which included researching the various projects available, reading through the job descriptions and talking to relevant members of the sending and receiving AIESEC local committees. They also brought with them souvenirs, gifts and food from their home country to show the locals, as well as preparing some notes and presentations for the classes. However, the volunteers did mention they should have done more preparation, *"The things I read before, the movies I watched were completely different from what I experienced. The language, gestures, culture was completely new ... I don't think I was prepared"* (V1, 2013). The amount of preparation varied between each person, ranging from reading some general details of Mainland China and Guangzhou, to attempting to learn some of the language before arriving in the city.

#### *The Project*

The first main category related to the foreign volunteer's expectations and motivations was on the project itself. *"Well, basically I expected it to be just an exchange project in which I teach the three classes"* (V3, 2013). It was believed there would be a strong focus on the students, and volunteers would be able to interact closely with them. The volunteers also noted that this was an opportunity to learn more about the environmental issues in Mainland China. *"I wanted to be able to talk to the students and interact with them personally. I also wanted to improve my leadership skills as well as research skills, and my awareness of the environment"* (V2, 2013). As shown, there was acknowledgement

surrounding the benefits they could gain from the classes depending on their involvement with the project. The foreign volunteers did not go into detail about their expectations of the other foreigners; however, there was general agreement that the work would be divided evenly between all volunteers involved.

AIESEC members also had expectations of the foreign volunteers in terms of the project. The members expected the foreign volunteers to prepare for the classes, be able to work successfully in groups, have time management skills and be proactive. *“I hope that they can put their heart into their work because they can travel here at any time, and this time is only for the projects”* (A7, 2013). Through these classes, it is expected the volunteers improve their teaching skills, gain work experience and learn more about environmental issues facing China and countries around the world. *“EPs who choose to take internships from AIESEC must have a desire to do something for the world. I think EPs who start the internship need to know the purpose ... and be clear about what kind of result they would like to see ... then they will get a meaningful and unforgettable internship from AIESEC”* (A9, 2013). The schools also agreed with these expectations, wanting classes that would be beneficial for students, while following the structure agreed upon by AIESEC and the schools. *“I hope the [target audiences] won’t set too many restrictions about the design of the classes and planned curriculum, as I think the form of the classes can be flexible”* (A8, 2013).

### *Social Relationships*

Prior to the project, the foreign volunteers expected to interact with local citizens involved in the project, as well as the AIESEC members and the other foreigners. However, they did not have an indication of how often these interactions would be. In comparison, AIESEC designed the project so the volunteers would interact with a range of different groups, including other volunteers, AIESEC members, school students, their home stay, members of the community associated with AIESEC, and locals of the general public. As a result, it is believed they would form close relationships and friendships with various people in the city. A main goal of AIESEC is to foster international friendship between China and the rest of the world.

### *Cultural Exchange*

There was acknowledgement by the foreign volunteers that they may experience culture shock and would have trouble communicating with locals, especially with the language barrier. However, many volunteers expressed an interest in learning about the country, people and culture of China. *“I wanted to learn and interact with the people ... I wanted to learn more about the culture and the way of life here”* (V1, 2013).

With regard to AIESEC and the schools, members wanted the foreign volunteers to facilitate cultural exchange, by preparing *“some culture presentation before they come to China ... bring something just like clothing ... prepare songs or dancing to show their culture ... when they come to China”* (A10, 2013). But what seemed to be more important was a willingness to learn, experience, and try to understand Chinese culture, especially Cantonese culture, during their stay. *“I hope that interns can correct some of their misunderstandings of China and start to love this imperfect country”* (A4, 2013). AIESEC members aimed to arrange home stays for the volunteers and interact with them throughout their stay, in the hopes the EPs were able to learn about culture and life in China from the people themselves *“People in the communities can make friends with foreigners, can be aware of protecting their culture ... gain more knowledge about the culture ... through EPs from different countries”* (A10, 2013).

### *Personal Development*

Some of the main motivations of being involved in the GPN project for the volunteers were related to personal development. *“I decided to do an AIESEC exchange because I wanted to do something different, I wanted to grow as a person and know more about myself”* (V1, 2013). Benefits such as becoming more independent were key points mentioned, as well as developing leadership skills and gaining confidence. There was also a focus on improving aspects of group work, preparation and conducting classes on topics they had previous knowledge on. *“I knew I wanted to do this project ... because there was a strong focus on students, so I could relate to their thinking and want to raise awareness in the classroom”* (V2, 2013), *“I wanted to do something that was related to the environment and also my study”* (V1, 2013).

It was a main goal of AIESEC to make sure that the volunteers enjoyed the classes and the project as a whole, and gained valuable experiences because of them. Although it was



noted by AIESEC that foreign volunteers would likely need assistance at the beginning of the exchange, it is expected that as time goes on, the volunteers became more independent. *"We are responsible for ... getting them settled into the city, accommodation, cultural sharing, translating etc. But after the beginning, we wish EPs to handle themselves"* (A6, 2013). It was also expected they grow as a person during the exchange and be aware of their influence on others, *"... the most important thing an EP should have is social responsibility. Only those who care about the society can deliver positive ideas to students"* (A4, 2013).

### *Concerns*

The foreign volunteers mentioned a few concerns about the project prior to arriving in Guangzhou. *"I would like to get more information and be more prepared"* (V1, 2013), *"[I would also like to] know more about the home stay. It was only organised at the last minute and I should've asked more about it, things like the expenses in China, about meals ... asked about where to go ... I didn't do much preparation, looked at maps of China, learnt more about the project ... read a bit about China ... the main things to do here, like the Great Wall"* (V2, 2013).

### **Summary**

From the discussion of the expectations and motivations of the foreign volunteers, a number of points become apparent. Firstly, the main purpose of participating in an exchange is to volunteer in the project, but also learn more about Mainland China. Personal development was an important factor, but this was seen as an outcome of being involved in the project and living in a foreign country. There was also the acknowledgement of the key role AIESEC has in the exchange, and the volunteers' main focus and expectations were related to the members of this organisation, with a specific focus on organising and assisting during the classes. There was diversity in the expectations of the voluntourists; however there seemed to be similar goals that each volunteer wanted to achieve. As highlighted in the literature, this similar focus on implementing a successful project for the target audience is not always apparent in the practice (Benson, 2010). The members of AIESEC and the school also had a number of expectations of the foreign volunteers, which were similar to those of the volunteers. Because of this important role AIESEC has in the GPN project, their expectations and motivations for being a part of the program will be highlighted next.

### 5.3.2 Expectations and Motivations of the AIESEC Members

This section focuses on the expectations and motivations of the AIESEC members involved in the GPN project, but also other members of AIESEC GDUFs. In order to highlight the expectations and motivations of the AIESEC members, they have also been divided into the four main categories.

#### *The Project*

A main reason why a number of university students became involved in AIESEC was because they wanted to improve aspects of the local society. Many AIESEC members stated that raising awareness of the environment and cultures, as well as helping students practice their English skills, were motivating factors of joining this project. One member wanted to “*cultivate students’ sense of environmental protection ... know more about [the] world ... [and] improve students’ spoken English*” (A6, 2013). Because the focus of the project was on local school students, many believed the project could make a real contribution to society and could continue doing so over a number of years. A number of the AIESEC members had prior experience teaching children in rural parts of Guangzhou, which was organised by a university committee. This experience, and related experiences, was an often motivation for joining AIESEC. One member mentioned that “*I suddenly found that one must do something meaningful and help others selflessly [after teaching in a rural village]. Thus, I joined AIESEC*” (A3, 2013).

The foreign volunteers did have expectations of AIESEC in terms of the project. This included receiving information about the exchange from AIESEC, helping out with classes when necessary, including with translation, and assisting with accommodation. The AIESEC members were aware of this expectation, “*It is my responsibility to get [the foreign volunteers] settled into the city and find a good home stay for them*” (A8, 2013). “*I consider my role as a bridge. I could link foreign count[ries] to China by getting along well with EPs and help them as much as I can. Getting them settled into the city needs local AIESECers to pay more attention on the procedure ... I act like a translator in the class*” (A3, 2013).

Furthermore, the schools expected the AIESEC members to set up the classes and follow the direction given by the teachers throughout the project, which meant a focus on environmental protection and culture. AIESEC was also expected to supply the foreign

volunteers, and assist in presenting the material, especially in regards to translation. Teachers were on hand to assist, but it was mainly up to the volunteers and AIESECers to run the classes. AIESEC wanted the projects to focus on environmental protection and concentrate on students being able to practice oral English with foreigners. The overriding view is for students to benefit from these classes by having the opportunity to interact with foreigners, and gain confidence and skills throughout the project.

One AIESEC member expected *“schools can become more and more open. They have to foresee that the way we are teaching is absolutely different from traditional education. We are not organising English classes for students. Instead, we are cultivating them to be more confident and to have more social responsibility”* (A4, 2013). It was expected there would be long term cooperation between these two parties, and the classes would have a main focus on the environment, but would also be flexible. *“The students [at the schools can] not only gain the knowledge of protecting the environment, but also put the theory into practice and change the environment step by step. Schools may find it well to have such wonderful classes and have long-term cooperation with [AIESEC]”* (A3, 2013).

### *Social Relationships*

The potential for social relationships was seen as another main reason for being part of the GPN project. AIESEC members mentioned this organisation could give them the opportunity to create relationships with a range of different people. *“I like making friends, through the project I can make many friends; EPs, buddies, AIESECers, people in the communities and NGOs, social workers and so on”* (A10, 2013). This could result in forming social contacts and building networks, as well as friendships. *“There was no doubt that experience and social interaction were what attracted me to join AIESEC. After going out for exchange, or providing service in communities, I have [a] better understanding on love, family and humanity, which helped me grow a lot”* (A4, 2013). In addition, creating a long term relationship between AIESEC and the target community was viewed as an important goal.

### *Cultural Exchange*

Members of AIESEC stated that they believed being involved in this organisation would give them an opportunity to raise awareness of Cantonese and Chinese culture. *“In my point of view, I think I can do more things to protect Cantonese culture because I am*

*Cantonese and some Cantonese ... don't know their culture deeply ... So, through the foreign eyes, Cantonese can be aware of their culture and protect the culture"* (A10, 2013). Through the project, AIESECers would have the opportunity to share and explain their culture to the foreigners and local students, so they can learn about it, rather than misunderstand it. *"First of all I'm always interested in culture issues, especially Chinese culture. And I think that most of the people [are] not ... aware of the values of Chinese culture, so I want to do something to change this situation. AIESEC provides such opportunity so I joined"* (A7, 2013). Furthermore, AIESECers could create or join city tours and show volunteers around cultural and heritage sites and highlight what culture means to them, thus raising awareness of it.

AIESEC members also wanted students to learn more about the world as well as more about China. *"I hope the project can really make a difference to the students, make them realise the significance and values of Chinese culture and spread it to more people"* (A7, 2013).

#### *Personal Development*

Through the discussions with the members of AIESEC, it became evident that personal development was another contributing motivation and expectation for those involved in the project. Practicing oral English with foreigners who are excellent or native speakers was a main benefit cited. One AIESECer mentioned that *"my English teacher told me that if I want [to improve my English], I would better [talk to a] native speaker, and AIESEC can give me this chance to learn more and practice more"* (A10, 2013). Other factors included wanting to gain work experience, gaining confidence and improving their leadership, project management and marketing skills, and environmental protection knowledge. *"I'm attracted by the atmosphere [in AIESEC], the people here are very energetic ... In order to get rid of my shyness I join[ed] it"* (A7, 2013).

Furthermore, AIESEC expected students would have the opportunity to develop and to improve their presentation, group work and planning skills. Members wanted students to be able to practice English in the classes, with a focus on oral communication with the foreign volunteers, which can lead to improved confidence and self-esteem. *"Personally, I wish to see the result that students are really learning something from our courses ... For the schools, it will be very successful if students can build up their confidence, their own opinions of social issues as well as their social responsibility"* (A4, 2013).

## **Summary**

Through the range of expectations and motivations the members of AIESEC have for the GPN project, it became evident the main focus was on the outcomes for the local schools. Many AIESECers joined this organisation in order to improve the local society and give students the opportunity to learn more about foreign countries, as well as the adverse issues of today's world, through environment protection and cultural exchange. As with the foreign volunteers, there were differing motivations and expectations of being involved, however many of these aligned with each other. This could have been due to the organisation selection process in choosing the members, to ensure they recognise the importance and risks of these projects. As a result, it was expected the AIESEC members, foreign volunteers and schools worked together to focus on this task, and cooperation was needed by all groups in order for this to occur. The AIESECers also recognised their role with regard to the foreign volunteers, and wanted the foreign volunteers to contribute through the project, but also learn more about China and create a lasting expression for all participants involved.

### **5.3.4 Summary of all Participants**

By highlighting the expectations of the groups involved with the GPN project, a number of points are apparent. Firstly, all participants are aware of the underlying goals of the project, a focus on the improvement of environmental and cultural awareness of the middle school students and the benefits the students can gain from classes. Furthermore, it becomes evident that the AIESECers have a central role in the project, as shown by the expectations the foreign volunteers and schools have of them. The AIESEC members want the volunteers to benefit socially, culturally and personally from this experience, and the results indicate there will likely be a close relationship between the two groups. It becomes evident that an interconnected relationship is recognised and is centred on AIESEC. In order to explore these ideas in more detail, and also to discuss the benefits and risks of the project, the outcomes of the GPN project on the foreign volunteers and members of AIESEC will be highlighted in the next section.

## 5.4 Research Question Two

*Research Question Two: Was the project considered to be significant to the voluntourists and sending organisation?*

The second research question focused on the outcomes of foreign volunteers and AIESEC members involved in the GPN project, in contrast to the expectations. Within these groups, the outcomes have been divided into the different categories discussed previously; the project, social relationships, cultural exchange and personal development.

### 5.4.1 Outcomes of the Foreign Volunteers

#### The Project

*“The exchange programme was one of the best decisions I have taken, for I had a lifetime experience in China” (V3, 2013).*

The foreign volunteers involved in the GPN project highlighted they had a number of positive experiences during the project. Coming into the project, their main expectations were that the classes mirror the job description given, and all the volunteers mentioned the classes achieved this goal. It was stated the variety of classes were a main benefit for the volunteers. By having the opportunity to focus on a range of environmental topics, with the possibility of suggesting their own, they were able to concentrate on topics they have a strong knowledge of or interest in. One volunteer highlighted that, *“we were all there to support one another, and we gained because of it” (V2, 2013)*, while mentioning, *“I also worked hard for the presentations, preparing and also delivering them, so the students got more out of it, and I gained a lot more by working hard for them” (V2, 2013).*

As for the classes that concentrated on cultural exchange, the volunteers stated they enjoyed these because they found students had a lot of questions about foreign countries, they could share interesting points about their own culture, while speaking in English to them. *“The high points of the projects were that my friends, buddies, EPs, and even the general public were co-operative. I had a great time learning about the interesting Chinese culture and sharing the Indian culture” (V3, 2013).* This gave them the opportunity to learn and understand one another to a greater degree.

In terms of the project, the foreign volunteers did not seem to have many criticisms. The main point was the communication issue that the volunteers had, *“... just to be more specific about the project prior to us coming. Like have some brief outlines to follow, information about the routine. Things that will make us more prepared for the class ... it would be good if there was more communication with the teachers, also with the parents if they had any issues with the class ... so they can inform us and the AIESECers on this before the class, so we know the issues”* (V2, 2013). Despite the volunteers speaking slowly in English, there would be some students that did not always understand, and translating large parts of the classes could disrupt the flow of the teaching. Also, the rooms were too big for the number of students, so the class was noisy and at times difficult to control. This also made the voluntourists wonder how much the school students benefitted from the experience, if they could understand the lessons, and if they enjoyed the interactions.

### **Social Relationships**

*“I was ... able to talk to others, other foreigners, AIESECers and local people in the city, which made my experience much more meaningful ... being able to create these close relationships that will last a long time”* (V2, 2013).

The foreign volunteers highlighted that the relationships and social interactions were a main positive outcome of the project. The most meaningful relationships were with the members of AIESEC, as they were the ones they saw the most. *“... the AIESECers were there each step of the way. If we were ever alone, we could call them for help, or just to hang out. Someone was always there to help and support us. They always included us in the group, we weren't seen as foreigners to them, but close friends* (V1, 2013). The AIESEC members also helped in the classes and showed the foreign volunteers the historical, cultural and tourist locations around the city during the week, as well as before and after classes. All the foreign volunteers said their interaction with the AIESECers was a high point of the experience, and they were able to learn a lot from their interaction with the local students. As a result, many close relationships and friendships were formed, and many still keep in contact. *“They were always there if I needed any help. Getting around, going to class, about the project. I could always rely on them ... I never felt alone. They are my best friends”* (V2, 2013).

There were also strong relationships formed between the foreign volunteers. There were a number of bonding experiences that just involved the foreign volunteer including sightseeing around Guangzhou and a trip to Beijing for a few days after the project had ended. *“As a tourist, it is a good part of the project, helps relax us, refreshes our minds, and let us know more about China. We have done this with other EPs, AIESECers, and other locals, so we have learn a lot about the country and people, and they also provide excellent bonding opportunities for everyone involved in the project. So we became closer and enjoyed the experiences more. The tourism aspect did this”* (V2, 2013).

The foreign volunteers were also able to create relationships with people from the wider community. This included the home stay, families or students who lived in Guangzhou, as well as meeting people around the city. *“I stayed with a student of a university here, so I learnt a lot about life here ... I made a lot of friends in the universities here, I went to classes with them, and could relate to their views and learn what they thought of China. So it was more like learn about the current views and culture of China from the people, rather than the historical perspectives”* (V2, 2013).

Despite the positive social outcomes on the foreign volunteers, they did highlight negative outcomes that became apparent. Firstly, some did become homesick and missed their friends and family back home. This was mainly apparent soon after they had arrived in Guangzhou, but often only lasted a couple of weeks. Although it was seldom mentioned, loneliness was another factor. Despite the interaction with other people, there were days where no one else was available. This was due to the AIESECers being busy with university and other commitments, and it was up to the foreigners to entertain themselves. It was noted by some members of AIESEC that they would show the EPs around the city in the first couple weeks, but it was up to them to be independent. *“[I would like the EPs to] ... try not to be too dependent to us AIESECers, I think the best way to experience a city’s culture is to explore it by yourself rather than rely on other people’s introduction”* (A7, 2013).

Another negative outcome of the socialising with foreign volunteers was that it meant there was less focus on preparation for classes. The volunteers were given the due dates of when the presentations had to be sent to the AIESECers, but this was not always met by all of the volunteers. In some instances, it became evident the socialising was taking priority



over preparation, with the team leader noting the preparation for the classes were not always satisfactory.

### **Cultural Exchange**

The foreign volunteers also expressed a number of positive outcomes in regards to culture. The key point was they were able to gain an in-depth understanding about Chinese and Cantonese culture from the locals. This involved seeing cultural performances, trying the food, travelling to various cultural and historical sites in the city and staying with a local Chinese family. *"I think the home stay gave us an excellent window into Chinese culture, it gave us a real feel of life in China"* (V2, 2013). As a result, one foreign volunteer described his experience as *"more of a cultural adventure, rather than a shock"* (V3, 2013). Being able to experience the culture meant the EPs were inspired to learn more about it. At restaurants they would try to order in Mandarin, use chopsticks and try different types of traditional food. *"AIESEC GDUFS went beyond [the classes] to showcase the Chinese culture, whether it is the food, travelling tips, various tourist places, or just hanging out, they were always there"* (V3, 2013).

The local students could show the foreigners the real China, rather than just a tour guide of the city. *"Being able to learn about the culture from the AIESECers was much more meaningful than just being a tourist in Guangzhou. I was able to learn a lot more about the actual life in China, rather than just see the Canton Tower"* (V2, 2013). During the course of the project, the EPs went to a number of key locations in the city, including museums, art shows and temples. Consequently, the foreign volunteers highlighted they gained from the project in terms of culture because of their close relationship to the AIESECers, local friends, teachers and students, as well as their home stay. *"It has been great being able to get so close to the AIESECers ... also to talk with the local people, the community we worked with, and the students. I wanted to learn more about the culture and the way of life here"* (V1, 2013).

In addition, culture shock could occur for them, especially when they first arrived. This mainly happened when they were alone and had to order food or communicate with someone who could not speak English *"Although not a low point, but I faced a little difficulty in communication with people, [however,] I had an English-Chinese dictionary to help me with that. Moreover, it took some time to get adjusted to the Chinese cuisine, but after that China was nothing less than a paradise to me"* (V3, 2013). Furthermore,

there was the possibility of disrespecting or insulting members of AIESEC or the public, or putting them in uncomfortable situations. There were instances of some of the volunteers becoming bored or disinterested in aspects of culture, especially in terms of historical or cultural sites. However, this culture shock and the differences between cultures can also have a positive effect on the voluntourists, allowing them to see the real China, learn about real everyday issues and challenge their views and pre-constructed stereotypes.

### **Personal Development**

As highlighted, a main expectation of the foreign volunteer was personal development from the project. While reflecting what they learnt, all volunteers expressed that they had the opportunity to learn more about themselves and to grow as a person. The main points were the opportunity to show and improve leadership skills, gaining confidence in teaching, socialising and travelling, working closely in groups, and time management skills. *“I have ... been able to be an organiser, a leader and many other roles, which have led to my own personal development, and given me a number of challenges, but it is very rewarding”* (V2, 2013). However, it seemed like the exchange of knowledge between the members of AIESEC and the volunteers, as well as with the students, were the most favourable ways of development. *“The project also involved developing and learning from one another, like exchanging our knowledge. Learning from the other EPs, AIESECers and also the students and teachers”* (V2, 2013). Furthermore, the foreign volunteers mentioned they became more independent and enjoyed freedom, which allowed them to grow as a person.

Despite the opportunities to improve personal skills, they were not always taken up, and this could mean they wanted to remain in their comfort zone. In some instances, opportunities of leadership and presenting were not taken by the foreign volunteers who could have improved these skills. Furthermore, some EPs were put in situations which they did not feel comfortable with, such as presenting to a large noisy class by themselves. Having to conduct a class alone could be a challenge for the volunteers, and meant the topics were not always adequately covered. However, these also lead to personal development as voluntourists were challenged, and had to adapt to new situations in a foreign country.

## **Summary**

By highlighting the positive and negative outcomes the foreign volunteers experienced during the GPN project, a number of key findings have become apparent. Overall the volunteers enjoyed the project and believed it achieved the underlying goal of being beneficial for all the participants involved. The volunteers also highlighted they made a number of close friendships during the exchange with others involved in the project, while learning about local culture, which they saw as more important and meaningful than going around the city as a tourist. Finally, the volunteers also gained a range of skills and experiences by being involved in the project.

Despite these positive outcomes, the foreign volunteers did take time to adapt to life in Guangzhou, and although there was help from AIESEC, there were issues surrounding the language barrier and getting around the city. Often this resulted in homesickness and loneliness, which could result in negative feelings about the exchange. However, having to adapt to life in a foreign country and learning to communicate with people without a shared language can help the foreign volunteer grow as a person. Furthermore, AIESECers did notice that the EPs focused on the social aspects of the project, and this sometimes took priority of the preparation for the classes and the cultural exchange. These negative outcomes have the possibility of influencing the other groups involved in project and upsetting the relationship between all the participants.

As shown, there was diversity within the experiences of the foreign volunteers, and these can be classified as a mixture of positive and negative outcomes. However, the voluntourists did recognise the project was significant; both to them and the others involved, and believed the outcomes were beneficial.

### **5.4.2 Outcomes of the AIESEC Members**

This section will focus on the outcomes of the GPN project on the AIESEC members. As before, the outcomes have been divided into four categories.

#### **The Project**

The main goal of the Incoming Exchange Department in AIESEC is to raise and match foreign volunteers with projects that focus on a target audience. The GPN project managed to match three volunteers with the project and conducted classes with two schools per

week. Overall, the AIESECers were happy with the project and the classes, and saw this as a success. They believed the volunteers had an enjoyable and impactful exchange, both on themselves and others, which was an underlying goal of the project. *“From my point of view, I think AIESEC is a good platform for teenagers to experience different culture and broaden their horizons. As a member here, we can not only gain some hard skills by receiving kinds of training but also soft skills through meeting with different people. We can’t expect too much because AIESEC is just a student run organization. What we can do for our [target audiences] is doing our best to run a project and meet their needs”* (A9, 2013). Furthermore, the AIESEC members believed the schools gained from the classes, and there are talks of continuing in the same schools for next term, although there is recognition for improvement. As a result, the project is becoming more sustainable than it has been in the last few years.

In terms of the GPN project, there was a drop in the number of foreign volunteers and host communities raised and matched this term compared to the previous one. This meant there were fewer classes and fewer volunteers. However, this is not necessarily a negative point as there is a greater focus on the environmental sector than previous years, and there is less work needed for preparation. There was also some miscommunication between the schools and AIESEC in terms of the project. As explained by the team leader, the planned curriculum was *“targeted for environmental protection ... but Hengfu School commanded that classes be aimed to culture”* (A6, 2013).

### **Social Relationships**

The members of AIESEC highlight the GPN project gives them an excellent opportunity to get to know a range of people, including other AIESECers and foreigners. Creating long term friendships was also a common outcome. *“During the activities, I can talk to EPs and enhance my speaking skills ... After the GPN and some other programs, I do expand my social interaction by making acquaintances with members [and the target audience]”* (A3, 2013). Many AIESEC members highlighted they wanted to be involved in the social sector in the future, so being able to work with NGOs, social workers and the wider community gave them excellent experience and contacts. In regards to the foreign volunteers, the AIESECers spoke of them being friends, and this friendship gave them the responsibility to help the EPs. *“We are friends! As a friend, we have the duty to help our foreign friends survive in a completely strange city”* (A4, 2013). As a result, AIESECers

saw themselves as having multiple roles in regards to the volunteers, as *“a guide, a facilitator and as a friend”* (A6, 2013).

As discussed previously, there was a possibility of the social interaction with members of AIESEC becoming more important than the project focus. Furthermore, despite the strong focus on relationships and interaction between the AIESECers and the foreign volunteers, this was not always the case. The AIESEC members are university students and often the project runs parallel with their assignments and exams. There was also a lot of organisational work needed for AIESEC members, so they often do not have enough time to hang out with the volunteers, even after class. *“I don’t think I do a good job because I have always been busy with my school work these few weeks, so I nearly have no chance to go travelling around the city with them”* (A7, 2013).

### **Cultural Exchange**

AIESEC members who are passionate about Chinese and Cantonese culture were given the opportunity to share their views about their culture with foreigners, students and other AIESECers. *“I always try my best to explain Chinese customs and introduce Chinese history to them. I ... find it difficult to translate some of the Chinese items to them”* (A7, 2013). This can lead to greater awareness of this diverse culture, a better understanding and can influence others to want to learn more. In terms of Cantonese culture, which could be considered endangered in Mainland China, AIESEC members noted that this is given another opportunity to be protected and shared with the younger generation. *“I ... try my best to introduce more Chinese culture to them. I consider that the culture sharing may be more important than the translating work”* (A8, 2013).

AIESEC members also highlighted that they have the opportunity to learn about foreign cultures from the volunteer, as well as being able to experience parts of the foreigners’ countries. This can result in AIESECers becoming more global thinkers, wanting to travel more, and learn more about other countries and cultures. *“We hope that every exchange can strengthen the link between China and the world. To let people know more about China ... instead of misunderstanding it”* (A2, 2013).

However, because the foreign volunteers did not always express an interest about the local culture, this could have been a negative outcome on the AIESEC members and may damage the relationships that are important to the positive outcomes of the exchange.

## Personal Development

AIESEC members mentioned a number of qualities they have improved on since being involved in this organisation. These include management, designing and preparing classes, organisational, improvements in confidence and communicating in English with various groups. *“At first, I wanted to meet some new friends, especially ... foreigners, [but] as time went by, I enjoyed teaching the children and staying with them, what’s more, our EPs are very interesting and friendly so I really enjoy getting along with them ... I can also practice my oral English”* (A5, 2013). AIESECers expressed that this project gave them the opportunity to do something meaningful for society, and being involved in AIESEC gave members the opportunity to learn what they want to do. *“It makes me know what I really want, because it is always providing me lots of chances to try to do what I want to do”* (A1, 2013). Ultimately, a number of members decided to continue to be involved in this organisation for multiple years. *“I want to join AIESEC because I think [it] is a stage for me to do the things I want to do ... here is filled with power, passion and happiness so I stay”* (A1, 2013).

There were limited negative outcomes in regards to personal development for the AIESEC members. One negative outcome was the stress that comes as a result of overwork, as AIESECers are expected to take care of the EPs and help with the classes, as well as focus on their university work and other commitments. Furthermore, all AIESEC members involved in the GPN project were volunteers as well. This may have consequential adverse impacts on the AIESEC member and volunteers, as well as the general structure of the project.

## Summary

The positive and negative outcomes of the project on the AIESECers highlight a number of important findings. Although there was diversity between the individuals, the members of this group emphasise that they enjoyed being involved in the project, and they believed it was successful because it was beneficial for the participants involved in the classes and events. AIESEC members were also able to create friendships with the foreign volunteers and show them around the city, as well as being able to share cultural, historical and touristic knowledge. The relationship with the schools was also strengthened through the project, and there is a strong possibility of continuing the project next term with these schools. Finally, members of AIESEC also were able to gain a vast array of skills and

many members wanted to continue their involvement with the organisation during their university life.

Despite the positive outcomes, there were a number of negative outcomes. Firstly, there was a slight decrease in the foreign volunteers and schools involved in the project from the last term. Furthermore, a number of AIESECers were expected to contribute a significant amount of their time to this organisation, which meant they had less time for their university work, social life and personal time. Consequently, this can create a stressful environment, as well as put pressure on other members, and can damage relationships between AIESECers and also with other participants in the project. Although there were a number of outcomes apparent for members, they did indicate overall satisfaction with the project, and there was hope that these types of projects could continue in the future.

#### **5.4.3 Summary of Outcomes Findings**

From the previous discussions on the outcomes of the foreign volunteers and AIESECers involved in the GPN project, a number of key findings became evident. These outcomes can be divided into four main categories for each group; the project, social relationships, cultural exchange and personal development, and each of these have positive and negative aspects. These findings have been summarised in three tables below.

**Table 4: Expectations and Outcomes of the Foreign Volunteers**

<b>Expectations of the Foreign Volunteers</b>	<b>Expectations the AIESEC members have of the foreign volunteers</b>	<b>Outcomes of the foreign volunteers</b>
<p>Environmental awareness classes in local middle schools.</p> <p>Interact with AIESECers, students and locals in Guangzhou.</p> <p>Learn about China and Guangzhou from the locals.</p> <p>Gain skills related to teaching and group work.</p>	<p>The EPs are involved in the classes organised by AIESEC.</p> <p>The EPs form close relationships with other volunteers, AIESECers, students and locals in Guangzhou.</p> <p>The EPs express an active interest in learning about culture, as well as share their own.</p> <p>The EPs enjoy the project, become more independent and gain life skills.</p>	<p>The EPs were involved in regular environmental awareness and cultural exchange classes. However, it was often difficult to communicate with and control the class.</p> <p>The EPs created close friendships with many groups involved in the project. However, this did mean less time was spent on preparation for the classes.</p> <p>The EPs learnt about the local culture, as well as about life in this country from local citizens, and could share their own culture in a number of different ways. However, this was not always seen as a main interest.</p> <p>The EPs learnt different work and life skills, and more about themselves. However, these opportunities were not always taken advantage of.</p>
	<b>Expectations the Schools have of the Foreign Volunteers</b>	
	<p>The EPs are involved in the project, prepare and conduct classes that are beneficial for the students.</p>	



**Table 5: Expectations and Outcomes of the AIESEC Members**

<b>Expectations of the AIESEC members</b>	<b>Expectations the foreign volunteers have of the AIESEC members</b>	<b>Outcomes of the AIESEC members</b>
<p>Environmental awareness classes in local middle schools that have a positive influence in society.</p> <p>Create close relationships with social groups and schools in Guangzhou and with foreigners.</p> <p>Share Chinese culture with others.</p> <p>Gain skills related to project management, environmental awareness and teaching, as well as practicing English with foreigners.</p>	<p>Give the EPs information about the project and assist during classes.</p> <p>Show the EPs around the city and help them adjust to life in Guangzhou.</p>	<p>Two environmental awareness classes per week at two different middle schools, and the Green Cup and Global Village. However, fewer classes than before and there was a focus on culture in these classes.</p> <p>AIESEC members formed close friendships with each other and the groups involved in the project, and saw the foreign volunteers as friends. However, the AIESEC members could not always see the foreign volunteers during the course of the project.</p> <p>AIESEC members shared Chinese culture with the EPs and schools. However, their audience some times did not want to learn.</p> <p>The AIESEC members could learn and practice a range of work and life skills, including practicing English with foreigners and project management skills. However, there was also the potential for stress.</p>
	<b>Expectations the Schools have of the AIESEC members</b>	
	<p>AIESEC members assist with the classes, and follow directions given by the schools.</p>	

As shown from the tables, the voluntourists and AIESEC members involved in the project had positive and negative outcomes in relation to the project, social relationships, cultural exchange and personal development. Although these varied between the groups and individuals, it became evident those participants most involved in the project gained the most benefits. In comparison, those that were less inclined to be part of the project, often did not gain these benefits and may face negative outcomes. However, the participants did view the project as being significant due to the outcomes that became apparent. The following chapter will analyse these tables and findings in more detail by discussing the main research questions presented at the beginning of this thesis.

## Chapter Six: Integration and an Emerging Optimistic Perspective

This chapter aims to analyse the findings from the results in to order answer the underlying research questions. It will begin by highlighting the significance to the participants of the GPN project to the foreign volunteers and AIESEC members by summarising the expectations and outcomes. Following this, the ways the project and outcomes related to the recommendations from the volunteer tourism literature will be discussed. Next, the process of integration will be discussed with regard to the underlying success of the project.

### 6.1 Research Question One and Two: Expectations versus significance

In order to highlight the perceived significance of the AIESEC volunteer tourism project, the findings regarding the expectations and outcomes will be discussed. Tables 2, 3 and 4 reveal there were a number of expectations related to the project, social relationships, cultural exchange and personal development for each group, and also their expectations of one another.

The discussion regarding the expectations and outcomes of all participants involved highlights a number of patterns that are related to the success of the volunteer tourism project. Firstly, there are a number of similarities between the expectations of each group. As shown, the main focus of each group participating in the project was on the project itself. The foreign volunteers highlighted that the main purpose of going on an exchange was to volunteer in the project, while many AIESECers joined because they could improve aspects of society, *“do something meaningful [for] society ... cultivate students’ sense of environmental protection ... know more about [the] ... world ... [and] improve students’ spoken English”* (A6, 2013). The main expectations of the school were also related to the project and the benefit of the school students, *“I hope the project can really make a difference to the students”* (A3, 2013). Furthermore, the expectations of the social relationships and cultural exchange are similar between the foreign volunteers and AIESEC members, while both the schools and AIESEC wanted to strengthen their co-operation and relationship.

As well as the expectations matching for each group, there were no distinct contradictions between the expectations of the participants. This meant one group would not prevent another from reaching their expectations and mutual relationships did exist. However,

there were some differences between the groups. Firstly, because of the focus of the project on the environment, the AIESEC members wanted the classes to concentrate on this topic. However, the teachers of the classes noted to AIESEC that they wanted to focus on cultural exchange as well, which resulted in a significant amount of time spent on the foreigner's culture. This did lead to discussions between the school and AIESEC, as there was disagreement over the topics. In the end, compromise was found and a number of classes did focus on cultural exchange, as well as environmental awareness.

In addition, there was diversity with regards to the expectations and outcomes within the groups, and each individual experienced different aspects of the project. This relates to the wider study of post-development, which reinforces the idea of 'multiple truths' rather than fixed expectations and outcomes for all members. As a result, this needs to be taken into consideration when analysing these findings and making assumptions on the significance of the project. However, from these findings it can be argued that the project was seen as a success by all participants, and thus the overall project was significant to the voluntourists and AIESEC members. This is because the main expectations for each group were known between the groups involved and it was believed they were achieved through the course of the project by the participants involved. The foreign volunteers were able to gain a range of experiences, from living and working in a different country, to learning about China by forming friendships with the local citizens. *"This exchange programme was one of the best decisions I have taken, for I had a lifetime experience in China"* (V3, 2013).

The AIESEC members were able to participate in a project they believed was meaningful to society, were able to share their culture and create friendships with foreigners. *"As I see, I think my role is to let EPs adapt to the lifestyle in China, guide them to travel around Guangzhou and learn the Cantonese culture, help them prepare the class and activities that they will join during the project, and help them solve some questions they meet in Guangzhou"* (A10, 2013). And finally, there was the perception the school students were able to participate in a different learning style and learn about the environment and other countries, while interacting with university students from China and abroad. Furthermore, AIESEC and the schools have noted they want to continue this cooperation.

Despite the benefits from the AIESEC project, it was apparent criticisms were evident as well. Firstly, the foreign volunteers experienced a number of difficulties during their exchange. During the classes, they often found it challenging to control the students, and

had trouble with the language barrier and adjusting to the lifestyle in China. As a result, the foreign volunteers needed assistance, despite AIESEC members wanting them to be more independent. These outcomes link to a series of points suggested by the current literature surrounding the implications of the host community.

Raymond and Hall (2008), as well as Ballie, Smith and Laurie (2011), highlight how volunteer tourism revolves around the idea of a foreigner going into a country and obtaining a position of power, regardless of their experiences or qualifications. It can be argued this occurred for this exchange as well. All foreign volunteers were university students with limited cross-cultural experience in teaching at middle schools and did not have any international teaching qualifications, and this did lead to a lack of control of the students. Furthermore, the AIESEC members that were needed for translation and assisting did not have any teaching qualifications either. However, it can be argued that the foreign volunteers and AIESEC members were aware they lacked knowledge in terms of the project, and that resulted in a large focus on feedback and communication from the schools. In addition, these challenges and new experiences may have added to the value of this exchange, and made the project more real to the foreign volunteers, rather than a typical tourist holiday. This transferral and acknowledgement of the lack of knowledge relates to the power relationships that exists between these groups, and will be explored further in the third research question.

### **6.1.1 The Influence of Voluntourism**

The idea of voluntourism can be understood as the combination of volunteering and tourism characteristics. According to the literature surrounding the idea of volunteerism, the common perception of a volunteer is a person who is involved in *“freely chosen and deliberate helping activities that extend over time ... without expectation of reward or other compensation and often through formal organizations, and that are performed on behalf of causes or individuals who desire assistance”* (Snyder & Omoto, 2008, p.3). As highlighted in chapter three, the AIESEC case study was considered to be a voluntourism project. In relation to the similarities the GPN project has with the idea of volunteering, the foreigners were deliberately involved in AIESEC for a number of weeks without monetary gain, to work on a project that aims at improving education of local schools who desire assistance.

However, it can be argued the idea of volunteering implies there is a one way relationship between the two groups (Holmes & Smith, 2012). As shown from the understanding of this term, the focus is on helping the target audience, while volunteers are put in the position where they do not receive any compensation from the host community (Holmes & Smith, 2012). Thus an unequal relationship is created because it suggests the locals do not have anything to give that the foreigners want or need (Holmes & Smith, 2012). Consequently, a one way relationship can reinforce stereotypes that exist because these are not challenged in the process (Holmes & Smith, 2012). Although voluntourism does incorporate a number of aspects of volunteerism, it will be argued a two way relationship is created because of the tourism factors involved (Lyons & Wearing, 2008).

As highlighted, tourism can be understood as going to a place of interest outside the home environment, while more specified forms of tourism focus on sustainability, the economic, social and environmental impacts, as well as the needs of the visitors and host communities (Keese, 2011). The idea of volunteer tourism combines the ideas of volunteerism and tourism and is used for *“tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer is an organised way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment”* (Wearing, 2001, p.1).

As shown from the discussion of the similarities between the GPN and volunteer tourism projects in chapter three, the AIESEC exchange matches the majority of characteristics of voluntourism projects highlighted in the literature, and consequently has a number of similarities with this type of project. Recognising the voluntourism aspect is important to the motivations and expectations of the participants involved, and can influence the success of these projects. This is because the tourism component can create a two way relationship between the participants involved (Lyons & Wearing, 2008). By expecting volunteers to travel and have free time in the country, it means they receive some form of compensation and are rewarded for their work from the locals. Furthermore, the tourism aspect allows the foreign volunteers to create connections with the host community, as it involves showing the foreigners around the area and teaching them aspects of the culture (Lyons & Wearing, 2008). *“As a tourist, it is a good part of the project, helps relax us, refreshes our minds, and let us know more about China ... we have learn a lot about the country and people, and [it has] provide[d] excellent bonding opportunities for everyone involved in the project”* (V2, 2013). Challenging the relationship between the participants

involved can not only raise awareness and understanding between the participants, but contribute to the success of voluntourism projects.

### **6.1.3 Summary of Research Question One and Two**

The findings of the GPN project highlighted that there were positive and negative outcomes, but overall it was considered significant by the participants. The current literature of volunteer tourism has highlighted ways to improve the projects that are being implemented, in order to maximise the benefits for all involved, while reducing the possible risks (Wearing & Grabowski, 2010; Coren & Gray, 2013). It will be argued the importance of using suitable volunteers for the project, recognising the significance of incorporating the host community into these projects and realising the value of generating cross-cultural awareness and acceptance can influence the overall success of the project. These will be discussed further after the recommendations have been examined.

## **6.2 Research Question Three**

*Research Question Three: What are the recommendations to achieving this goal, and were these evident in the case study?*

The third research question focuses on the recommendations suggested by the academic literature to achieving the underlying goal of voluntourism projects. The following section will discuss how AIESEC has implemented each of these improvements into the project, and what affect this has had on the participants involved.

### **6.2.1 The Importance of Incorporating Appropriate Participants**

The literature surrounding volunteer tourism highlights the importance of using appropriate participants in the projects (Raymond & Hall, 2008). As shown from the AIESEC case study, there are risks involved using volunteers. The foreign volunteers and AIESEC members may not have the experience needed to teach middle school students in a cross-cultural setting, which can impact the success of the project. There is also no guarantee the selected participants will continue their focus and involvement with the classes and preparation throughout the project, and may decide to exhibit touristic behaviour instead. However, despite these risks, AIESEC implements processes in order to select appropriate volunteers for the projects.

With regard to AIESEC, there is a long process involved in selecting suitable foreign volunteers for the project. This includes an interview with the sending AIESEC and a number of discussions with its members, as well as an interview with the receiving AIESEC before they are chosen. Furthermore, it is up to the potential foreign volunteer to find potential projects, while also funding transportation, the exchange and often accommodation. In comparison, it can be cheaper, easier and quicker to travel around a country as a tourist instead. These monetary and time costs, as well as interviews focusing on ability and experience, can influence the type of volunteers selected for these projects. As a result, it can be argued that the volunteering aspect influences the selection of foreigners involved and means those who apply are likely to have a strong altruistic motive and thus will focus on the project (Guttentag, 2009).

Similar to the foreign volunteers, AIESEC members are also volunteer positions and have to spend time and money to be involved in this organisation. There is an interview process and members are selected on their ability and experience. Because this organisation is student-run and does not receive funding, the majority of positions are volunteers. Although members can be compensated for some expenses incurred during a project, there are costs associated to being a member of this organisation. Despite this, it can mean AIESEC members have a strong focus on the project and involvement in the organisation, because this helps determine their development within AIESEC. Consequently, those in higher positions are likely to have the motivation and experience to implement a successful project.

Despite the potential success of the selection process and using volunteers, there are still risks involved. A main aim of AIESEC is to match volunteers with projects, and the organisation's success is based on the amount of matches they can get. This can mean there is the possibility of foreign volunteers and AIESEC members being involved in the project even if they do not meet the requirements. An unqualified or inexperienced individual may be chosen if there are no suitable EPs or members available, as there is pressure to reach a specific target.

As shown, AIESEC does implement a number of processes to select the best available participants for the projects, and it is evident there is a focus on the foreign volunteers and AIESEC members who would be most suitable. Because of the risks involved using volunteers, structures need to be put in place to set requirements for those involved. These

can lead to appropriate volunteers and members of the sending organisation being chosen for the volunteer tourism projects, who want to be actively involved. Although there are still risks associated with these methods, it does become evident that by focusing on the volunteerism aspect, in combination with interviews, suitable participants can be chosen. Next, the incorporation of the host community will be discussed.

### **6.2.2 The Importance of the Incorporation of the Host Community**

The volunteer tourism literature highlights the importance of the incorporation of the host community in volunteer projects (Benson, 2010). This is because there is a risk of the control over the project being held by the foreign volunteers and foreign sending organisation, who then dictate how and where these projects are implemented, often at the expense of the target audience. As a result, the literature highlights how it is essential to develop projects with the incorporation of the target audience and host community, and emphasises the important role of the sending organisation (Coren & Gray, 2012). This occurred in the AIESEC case study in a number of ways.

Although AIESEC is an international organisation, each local committee is based in a university and is run by local students, while the majority of projects are based within that city and focus on the wellbeing of that society. There is a strong focus on the local scale in order to improve local communities, as many of the organisers grew up in the city. Furthermore, because of this local connection, it means there is greater communication between the sending organisation and the target audience. This can create projects that are of genuine value for the target audience because there is agreement on the focus of the projects implemented, and are seen as a joint program to improve the wellbeing of the target audience.

In addition to the importance of local scale, there should also be a focus on the relationships formed. By creating strong relationships between all members involved, especially with regards to the host community, it can lead to the incorporation of all participants. As shown during the AIESEC case study, relationships were a key focal point. There was emphasis on forming bonds between the foreign volunteers, AIESEC members and schools. As one AIESEC member put it, *“We are friends! As a friend, we have the duty to help out foreign friends survive in a completely strange city”* (A4, 2013). By using this attitude for each group, it can mean close relationships can be fostered,



which can improve communication between all members, and thus leading to greater incorporation. *“I also wanted to learn about people of our own age ... the differences we share ... Only the people can share their views with you. I wanted to live as close to the locals as possible, in order to learn and share our views”* (V1, 2013).

As shown, there are risks involved for the host community by implementing projects that use a voluntourism framework. This is because control and the focus of the projects are likely to be concentrated on the foreign volunteers and organisations involved. However, by incorporating a locally-based organisation with a local target audience, and a focus on relationships, it means there can be greater emphasis on the needs and wants of the host community. Consequently, it may mean the negative outcomes associated with volunteer tourism projects can be minimised, while the benefits are maximised. The final recommendation by the literature concentrates on the relevance of cultural exchange between the participants involved in the projects (Raymond & Hall, 2008).

### **6.2.3 The Importance of Cultural Exchange**

The idea of culture can be understood as *“part of everyday life, and are systems of shared meaning that can exist on ... different spatial scales. They are embodied in the material and social world, and are dynamic rather than static”* (McEwan, 2001, p.155). The idea of intercultural argues that culture is constructed through interaction, and this *“we learn about us through relations with others”* (Vodopivec, 2012, p.59). With regard to volunteer tourism, it is noted that culture is an important feature because this field involves the interaction and involvement of people from different cultures, and thus problems can arise. The current literature highlights the importance of culture, and the final suggested improvement notes the *“opportunities for interaction with other cultures should be deliberately facilitated”* (Raymond & Hall, 2008, p.541). This can result in greater understanding between the participants involved, as well as more involvement of the foreigners with the locals on the projects.

Culture is a key aspect that AIESEC focuses on for the projects it implements. This is done by giving volunteers the opportunity to learn and experience the local culture, as well as allowing them to share their foreign culture with all participants. With regard to the foreign volunteers, home stays were used so they could experience local life in Guangzhou. Members of this organisation were also in charge of showing them around the city, going

to historical and cultural sites, and helping them in everyday life, including ordering food and practicing the language. *"I had a great time learning about the interesting Chinese culture ... China was more of a cultural adventure than a shock for me. The best part I was able to appreciate the Chinese culture and see the beauty of it"* (V3, 2013). The foreign volunteers could also travel outside the city with AIESEC members, and did go on short trips outside of the main city centre during their exchange. They were also given the opportunity to share their own culture with the local citizens, during classes and also during the culture event, the Global Village. Furthermore, potential volunteers went to an Outgoing Preparation Seminar hosted by the sending AIESEC prior to leaving on their exchange, which focused on adapting to the lifestyle in the destination country.

Because of the focus on culture, the foreign volunteers were able to learn about local life in Guangzhou from the citizens, and experience the diversity of culture within the city, through the perspective of the host. There were some negative outcomes related to culture, such as culture shock and misunderstandings, however, because wanting to learn about culture is a focal point of the AIESEC exchange, the findings highlighted that these issues were minimised as much as possible. In addition, facing cultural challenges and difficulties that come as a result of living in a foreign country, can help to make the experience more real, and lead to additional outcomes, including increasing adaptability, confidence and remaining calm in stressful situations. Consequently, it becomes evident that the idea of intercultural was facilitated through the actions of AIESEC, which can affect the possible outcomes of the project on all participants.

It can be argued the tourism aspect of the project was responsible for the possibility of intercultural being facilitated and a two way relationship was formed between the participants. Because the project exists on the international scale, that is, it is based in another country other than the volunteer, it means the foreign volunteers can gain international work experience, have the chance to travel around a new country and learn about a new country. As shown, these were all key motivators highlighted by the foreigners who joined the project. However, there was recognition by AIESEC that the volunteers wanted to do this and there was a significant amount of time focused on giving the foreigners the opportunity to learn and explore Guangzhou. As one AIESEC member put it, *"I expect them to act as tourists in China; if I went overseas I would also want to see the country"* (A7, 2013).

By incorporating a voluntourism approach, it can give the foreign volunteers the opportunity to learn about the country they work and live in, while allowing the sending organisation to be closely involved with them during their stay. *“I think all the EPs are volunteers because they pay for their efforts to this project. They travel around in their spare time in order to experience the culture here”* (A9, 2013). Consequently, a two way relationship was formed between the foreign volunteers and host community, because they exchanged knowledge between each other, thus creating additional benefits (Lyons & Wearing, 2008). Furthermore, the volunteering aspect meant the foreigners can be involved in the wider community, and thus be able to gain a deeper connection than a normal tourist would. Although there is the risk for the touristic side being too favoured by the foreigners, AIESEC believes the voluntouristic features of the project are important facilitators of cultural exchange, and thus the success of the project. *“[I see myself as] a combination of [a volunteer and tourist]. It depends on how the AIESECers treat you. They treat you as a volunteer, and this occurs throughout the project, when you have work to do. But you can also travel, you get freedom to do what you want, you can be independent ... This exchange gives you this opportunity to do this, to be flexible”* (V1, 2013).

#### **6.2.4 Summary of Research Question Three**

The literature surrounding the idea of volunteer tourism highlights a number of areas of improvement relating to the participants used, the incorporation of the host community, and the exchange of culture. As shown from the case study, there are risks associated with certain participants being involved, the exclusion of the host community in favour of the foreigners, and the potential for cultural miscommunication. AIESEC highlights a number of ways to improve these. The volunteering aspect can mean appropriate participants are selected because the costs and selection process involved may deter inappropriate individuals, while also reducing costs for the target audience. Furthermore, by concentrating on the local scale and formation of relationships, it can lead to greater involvement of the host community. Finally, the tourism aspect gives the opportunity to concentrate on cultural exchange between the participants, if this is focused on by the sending organisation, while improving the exchange of knowledge between the foreigners and locals involved.

Through this discussion, it becomes evident that voluntourism features of the project are important and may influence the success of the projects for the participants involved. However, the links to the underlying goals of this voluntourism project are not revealed in this discussion. In order to focus on the research aim, which attempts to compare the experiences of the voluntourists with the underlying goals of this field, the next research question will concentrate on the idea of integration. Consequently, it will be argued this process can influence and represent the goals of connection and understanding between people and place, which helps to determine the significance of volunteer tourism projects around the globe.

### **6.3 Research Question Four**

*Research Question Four: How may these experiences of a short-term voluntourism project relate to the underlying goals of voluntourism?*

The fourth research question attempts to relate the underlying goals of voluntourism projects with regard to integration, while discussing this idea to the previous research questions. The underlying goals of voluntourism focus on creating a significant connection between the people and places, as well as being significant to the people involved, and I will argue the experience of this case study can be considered to achieve this, by linking to the idea of integration. This section will begin by emphasising integration and highlight the importance to volunteer tourism by discussing it in regards to the importance of place, identity and power. Through this, it will be argued that the process of integration should be taken into consideration for the success of volunteer tourism projects.

#### **6.3.1 The Process of Integration**

It can be argued that the idea of integration can be seen as a key aim of volunteer tourism projects that can influence the outcomes of the project. By discussing integration in relation to a number of underlying ideas, recommendations for volunteer tourism programs can be made, while there can be a greater understanding of the underlying themes present.

The idea of integration can be understood in relation to the theories of separation and assimilation, which highlight how migrants may relate to their new host society (Castles & Miller, 2009). Separation theory describes the process of preserving their own culture while the migrant rejects the dominant or host culture of the new society (Wingens et al.,

2011). In comparison, the idea of assimilation is the process of a migrant incorporating the cultural and social identities of the host society as their own (Castles & Miller, 2009). From these ideas, the understanding of integration highlights how a migrant may adopt aspects of the cultural and social identity from the host society, while maintaining parts of their own identity of origin (Kleinschmidt, 2006). It is also linked to the idea of multiculturalism and interculturalism, as well as highlighting the important role of governments and organisations in this process (Castles & Miller, 2009).

The overriding aim of integration is to give migrants the opportunity to be incorporated into the social and economic spheres of the new society, while maintaining social and cultural links to their origin (Castles & Miller, 2009). Integration is important because there is an acknowledgement the foreign volunteer and sending organisations lack of knowledge related to volunteer tourism projects, so this process can balance the relationships that exist. In order to highlight the links integration has with the success of the projects, it will be discussed with three main ideas related to this field, place, identity and power. By focusing on these ideas, it will be argued that integration is a key aspect of volunteer tourism and can influence the projects that are implemented.

### **6.3.2 The Importance of Place**

Recognising the importance of place is a key aspect that may influence the outcomes of volunteer tourism projects, the significance of the project, and long term connection (Keese, 2011). As explained, place can be understood as a defined space that is “*invested with understandings of behavioural appropriateness, cultural expectations, and so forth*” (Harrison & Dourish, 1996, p.3). With regard to integration, the role of the government and organisations assisting the migrant is seen as essential, and this view is also apparent in volunteer tourism. If there is a strong focus on the sending organisation to assist volunteers during their stay, in terms of accommodation, culture shock and travel, it can make it easier for the volunteer to adjust to the new city. Furthermore, by focusing on social and cultural means, such as creating friendships and allowing foreigners to gain an understanding of life in the new society, it can create a connection between the volunteer and the place. If this connection is made, it means the volunteer becomes more invested in the place, as well as the wellbeing of the society. Consequently, they are more likely to be involved with the project and the underlying aims, as well as wanting to learn more about the society, and thus being able to integrate into it.

The sending organisation and target audience also have a connection with the place, which can influence their involvement with the project. Because AIESEC GDUFS and its members are based in Guangzhou, as well the schools involved in the project, all these participants have a strong connection with the local place. A number of AIESEC members noted they worked on previous projects with a focus on social issues in the district, as well as the wellbeing of the society being a key motivator for joining the organisation, which reinforces this connection. Through this, it becomes evident the degree of the connection and investment the sending organisation and the target audience has with the place will influence their involvement in the project, as well as their contribution to the connection the volunteer tourist has with the place.

Because AIESEC members and the schools were locally based, they were able to focus on the practical issues the volunteers had to face related to moving to another country, as well as the language, creating friendships and other economic, social and cultural factors. In addition, a significant number of AIESEC members were from Guangzhou or the wider Guangdong province. Consequently, the level of integration the sending community and target audience has with the place, can determine the level of integration the foreign volunteer has. This can influence not only the positive and negative outcomes of the foreign volunteer, but also the contribution the sending organisation and volunteer has on the project, which ultimately affects the target audience through positive or negative means. The idea of identity, especially in regards to integration and place, is the next idea that can influence the outcomes of volunteer tourism projects.

### **6.3.3 The Importance of Identity**

Identity can be understood as distinctive characteristics belonging to an individual, which are relational, contextual and fluctuate through time (Delanty et al., 2006). A more specific understanding of identity in relation to the field of development is the idea of positionality (Rose, 1997). Positionality incorporates the characteristics of identity, and can determine how an individual is perceived by others and by one's self (Rose, 1997). In regard to volunteer tourism, the identity of the foreign volunteer is an important aspect that can influence the outcomes of the project (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010).

The literature surrounding volunteer tourism highlights the idea of VOLUNtourists verses volunTOURISTS, and suggests the former focuses more on the volunteer aspect of their

exchange, while the latter enjoys the touristic side (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010). In regards to the AIESEC case study, it becomes evident that the foreign volunteers involved in AIESEC have a strong focus on the volunteering aspect, but also with a lesser focus on the tourism aspect, and thus can be considered VOLUNtourists. This idea was supported by the discussions with members of AIESEC and the foreign volunteers. However, it became clear that the volunteer's VOLUNtouristic identity did change during the project, which could be seen at different times of the exchange. At times the foreign participants could be seen as mainly being a volunteer, while at other times, could be argued as mainly being a tourist. *"I think of them [as] both [a volunteer and tourist]. Of course they come here for voluntary work, but at the same time they are totally new here, they are interested in everything here and they have a strong desire to know more. If I were an EP, I would also want to travel around the city as a tourist"* (A7, 2013). Consequently, it can be argued the VOLUNtourist idea of identity fluctuates and is dependent on the setting, much like the wider understanding of identity.

The idea of VOLUNtourists and volunTOURISTS can be associated with a broader idea of identity that is related to volunteer tourism. The understanding of insider and outsider is a key aspect that can determine factors of integration for the foreigner (Hage, 2006). This idea refers to an individuals or groups relation to particular socio-cultural spaces and places. An insider is someone who 'belongs' to a specific place, and has historically evolved in relation to that place (Hage, 2006). A classic example is that of a tourist who is perceived as an outsider because they generally lack that connection to the place, in comparison to the local community, whom are considered insiders (Hage, 2006). Consequently, there is a gap between the relationship of the tourist and locals due to the difference in connection to the place (Hage, 2006). In regard to the AIESEC case study, the foreign volunteers would be viewed as outsiders, while the AIESEC members and schools would be insiders, and this influences the relationship between the participants, as well as the outcomes of the project.

The literature also highlights the connection between the individuals and the insiders or outsiders can determine how their identity is perceived (Hage, 2006). If a person has social relationships with a socio-cultural group within a space, that person may be viewed as more of an insider than somebody who associates more with outsiders. Thus the connection with a specific place, as well as the people of that place, especially in terms of

cultural awareness and understanding, can determine the view of insider or outsider (Hage, 2006).

Despite the assumption of volunteer tourists being considered outsiders, there are arguments in the literature that suggest they are not always viewed as tourists by local communities because of their involvement, and thus cannot be considered full outsiders (McGehee & Andereck, 2009). In regards to the AIESEC case study, AIESEC members viewed the foreign volunteers as friends, rather than foreigners, and thus did not consider them as outsiders. As one foreign volunteer mentioned, *“I saw myself more of a volunteer inside the classes, but outside I was more of a friend than a tourist”* (V3, 2013), while a number of AIESEC members believed that *“for [the schools] they are volunteers, [but] for us, they are our friends”* (A2, 2013). However, it would be questionable to call foreign volunteers insiders, even those involved in the GPN project, because the insider identity is determined by time and the degree of connection, and potential outsiders can be viewed differently by each insider. Regardless, there is the potential for volunteer tourists to be considered more of an insider, and this is largely dependent on their integration.

As highlighted, the idea of identity can be understood as a set of characteristics that are perceived by one self and by others, and the similarities of these characteristics and connections between people can create socio-cultural groups and places, and those without these relations are considered outsiders from these. However, just like dual identity of voluntourist, the insider-outsider paradigm is not static and fluctuates (Delanty et al., 2006). Consequently, an individual can be considered as a combination of insider and outsider, if they have characteristics of both (Hage, 2006). This idea can be highlighted through the case study, as the exchange participants are viewed as foreigners and are associated with tourism, but do have a connection with the place, in terms of learning the culture, and the people, in terms of social relationships. As a result, this is related to the idea of dual identity (Delanty et al., 2006).

Dual identity can be used to refer to an individual that is associated with multiple places and socio-cultural groups, and can change their identity depending on the situation (Delanty et al., 2006). Consequently, it is possible for an individual to be associated with multiple groups or places, and thus can have multiple insider identities. Furthermore, an *“outsider is a specific mode of being an insider”* (Hage, 2006, p.343). As a result, it can be argued we are all insiders and outsiders, and it is a result of our multiple identities that we



are considered to be both across space and place (Delanty et al., 2006). This idea of dual identity can determine the level of integration of the foreign volunteers with the host community, and thus influence the outcomes of the project. Through this idea, it can be argued foreign volunteer challenge their own identity by connecting with other identities in these volunteer tourism projects. As a result, there is an active unsettling of identity, in order to create dual identities, and thus become more integrated into the new society.

The idea of identity is closely associated with integration, as the characteristics of an individual and their connection with the place influences their integration into a socio-cultural society and place. Through this discussion on identity, it becomes evident it is a defining factor that influences the integration of the foreign volunteer. It can also be argued that time spent on exchange, the degree of connection with the place, in terms of experience and knowledge as well as the relationships with the people, are defining factors of how the foreigner is viewed, as an insider, outsider, or something in between. If the host community views the foreign volunteer and sending organisation as more of an insider than outsider, it can mean they have a greater chance of being integrated into that society. As one foreign volunteer jokingly put it, *"I was able to blend so well in China, honestly I see myself as a Chinese now"* (V3, 2013). By recognising their own identity, foreign volunteers challenge the notion of a single identity, and actively unsettle this by being involved in volunteer tourism projects and integrating into the community. Consequently, it can result in an improvement of the participants used, greater incorporation with the host community, as well as a focus on culture, which can emphasise the benefits of the volunteer tourism project, while there is greater integration due to the deliberate unsettling of the single identity.

#### **6.3.4 The Importance of Power**

The volunteer tourism literature highlights the importance of relationships between all participants involved in these projects (Wearing & Grabowski, 2010). This is to ensure that the expectations of each group is realised by all other members, as well as recognising the subsequent outcomes of the project (Wearing & Grabowski, 2010). If there are close relationships between all participants, it can also mean relevant feedback is noted and used for future projects, thus improving the chances of reducing the risks associated with volunteer tourism. However, power is a key factor that may influence the relationships between all participants involved, and thus the outcomes of the project.

Power is a factor involved in the formation and strengthening of relationships in regard to volunteer tourism. As discussed, power is not understood as an object or resource, but rather as a circulation or a web (Panelli, 2004). Through this, power relationships can be formed based on social relations and identities. However, depending on the discourses present, unequal power relationships can be formed. The post-development literature highlights the possibility of unequal power relationships being formed within volunteer tourism, mainly between the host community and the sending organisation and/or foreign volunteers (Simpson, 2004). As discussed, this has the potential to lead to negative outcomes for the target audience, while those in control of the project with the most influence benefit as a result (Guttentag, 2009). Consequently, power is an important aspect related to the improvement of these volunteer tourism projects (Raymond & Hall, 2008). In order to discuss this, a series of points related to equalising the power relationships that exist between all members of the volunteer tourism projects will be emphasised.

Despite this possibility of an unequal power relationship becoming apparent, there are ways to improve this situation, and involve the interaction between all members of the volunteer tourism projects. Because of the participatory framework of this thesis and the underlying focus on the field of development studies, the recommendations of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness have been used as a starting point for strengthening relationships between the parties involved. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness was an attempt to change the way donor and developing countries do business with each other, based on the principles of partnership, with a focus on improving the effectiveness of development aid for human wellbeing (Owa, 2011). Through this, points were raised surrounding ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability, which could equalise the power relationships that exists between the sending and receiving countries of development aid (High Level Forum, 2005; Owa, 2011). In addition, it can be argued these main recommendations can also be implemented in volunteer tourism programs.

Ownership specifically refers to ownership by the host community, and gives them authority over the project, essentially having the opportunity of being in charge of their own development and their potential to create their own future, while the sending organisation “*relinquish[ishs] degrees of control themselves*” (Chambers, 2005, p.72; High Level Forum, 2005). Giving the target audience ownership of the project means they can decide where the help is most needed, and well as having control over the decision

making. This can make the projects more meaningful for the wider community; however, the sending organisations and foreign volunteers must respect their decisions. This type of relationship was seen during the AIESEC exchange, with a significant influence regarding aspects of the project coming from the schools, which can lead to an equal power relationship between all members.

The alignment of goals between the sending organisation, foreign volunteers and host community are another key aspect related to the relationship between all three (High Level Forum, 2005). The Paris Declaration emphasised the importance of the external parties aligning with the principles and goals of the local host partner (High Level Forum, 2005). Through this, there can be realisation and a focus on the goals of the community, and a foreign objective does not become dominant (High Level Forum, 2005). As shown from the case study, there is consultation with the target audience before, during and after the project to ensure their perspectives are taken into account, and aspects of the project were changed in order to align with the requests of the schools. Through this process, it is more likely the foreign volunteers, members of AIESEC and schools have similar expectations related to the aspects and outcomes of the project.

Harmonisation is the third factor related to balancing power relationships between participants involved in volunteer tourism projects. Harmonisation relates to greater communication, transparency and collective agreement between the foreign volunteers, sending organisation and host community (High Level Forum, 2005). It was noted in the case study that communication was an issue between all participants, and this did influence the outcomes of the project. As related to alignment, there should be recognition of the individual goals, expectations and strengths of each participant, as well as regular feedback throughout the project, in order to ensure the minimisation the risks associated with volunteer tourism. Through this process, there is the possibility of creating and maintaining equal power relationships between the foreign volunteers, sending organisation and host community.

Managing for results refers to a focus on managing the resources available, and also improving decision making related to the outcomes (High Level Forum, 2005). As a result, there should be awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of each participant group, especially in terms of experience and expectations. Through this recognition,

improvements can be made throughout each stage of the project, which can mean there is a greater possibility of the goals of the project being achieved.

The final aspect that is related to power relationships in regard to volunteer tourism projects is mutual accountability. This highlights how each participant group is accountable for the positive and negative outcomes of the project, and is responsible for improving the outcomes (High Level Forum, 2005). Not only can this improve the focus on the benefits of the project, it can also mean there is greater trust between the participants and support for the project.

The current literature on volunteer tourism highlights the potential for unequal power relationships being formed between participants involved in these projects. In addition, there is a lack of knowledge for the foreign volunteers and sending organisation, which can put the host community in a position of power. If there is a focus on accountability, communication and transparency, with the host community having control over decision making of the project through discussions with all participant groups. However, it can be argued the participants are aware of the unequal power relationship and lack of knowledge of both ends, because it involves groups with particular skill sets. Consequently, by attempting to equalise this relationship and transferring knowledge and power between the participants, there is an active unsettling of this relationship. Rather than reinforcing the inequalities, these volunteer tourism projects acknowledged the disparities, and focused on improving them through the process of integration. If the relationship between the sending organisation and host community can be strengthened, it can result in long term coordination with the one another, which may improve various aspects of the project for the participants involved. Consequently, if equal power relationships can be achieved, it means there is a greater chance of the host community accepting and implementing the project and the foreign volunteers, which can help the integration process.

#### **6.3.5 Summary of Research Question Four**

Integration is a key aspect that can influence the outcomes of volunteer tourism projects. As shown, the degree of integration the volunteer tourist, as well as the sending organisation, has in the host community and wider society, can determine the success of the project. By focusing on place, identity and power, it becomes evident these ideas are interconnected and all must be recognised for the volunteer and sending organisation to be

successfully integrated. As shown from the case study of the GPN project, how the foreign volunteers and AIESECers connect with a place is also related to their connection to the people of that place, and their identity and awareness of culture helps determine the power relationships that are formed. During the project, the foreign volunteers highlighted that they did not feel excluded from locals, but could create a connection with them through numerous interactions. Furthermore, by implementing aspects surrounding ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability, these power relationships can be equalised, which can help to achieve the underlying goals of voluntourism projects, as shown with the links to the process of integration.

In addition, there can be the transferral of knowledge between the participants involved, which can actively unsettle the ideas of identity and the power relationships that exist. Consequently, it can be argued that volunteer tourism projects can foster greater awareness and understanding between the participants, because their involvement suggests they actively seek to challenge the stereotypes and unequal power relationships they are supposed to reinforce, which fosters greater integration. However, despite these findings related to integration, there are criticisms around using this idea in relation to volunteer tourism.

### *Criticism*

Although the findings may relate volunteer tourism projects to integration, a number of criticisms do become apparent. Firstly, the idea of integration has a long term focus, which extends from migrants over multiple years to generations (Castles & Miller, 2009). In comparison, the foreign volunteers associated with AIESEC were in Mainland China for less than two months, and this is a common trend for volunteer tourism projects. One key issue related to time is knowledge of the local culture, especially learning the language, which needs a significant amount of time (Castles & Miller, 2009). Despite this difference in time, a certain degree of integration can be accomplished in a relatively short amount of time, if it is focused on (Castles & Miller, 2009). Consequently, if a strong connection is made, it can result in the foreign volunteer returning to that place in the near future to live, and want to continue to be involved in that culture. As one foreign volunteer mentioned when asked what he would change if he did the same project again, *“I would try to stay in China for a longer time so that I can contribute and learn [more about the place]”* (V3, 2013). Furthermore, despite the relatively short time of the volunteer tourists, there is a

long term relationship between the sending organisation and host community, which can lead to improvements in the project and a strong relationship between the two. As a result, although the underlying goals of voluntourism projects may not be achieved in the short term, this process can lead to a greater connection and understanding in the long term. This criticism also supports a key finding in the literature, which suggests longer term projects yield greater benefits for all participants involved, may be due to the level of integration (Raymond & Hall, 2008).

Another criticism related to the idea of integration is the risks associated with the host community (Castles & Miller, 2009). If there is too much focus on the establishing that connect with the foreign volunteer, especially in terms of showing them the place, providing accommodation, assisting with translations and helping them to adjust, it can detract away from the host community and create additional work for the sending organisation and the target audience. As shown from the case study, AIESEC was able to do this because it is a large locally based organisation with a number of members. In addition, there was a focus on the foreign volunteers being independent after a few weeks, in order to reduce the work for AIESEC members. Consequently, it becomes evident there are different degrees of integration for volunteer tourism projects, which would differ depending on the sending organisation, foreign volunteers used and the host community.

By focusing on the GPN project, the importance of integration in terms of place, identity and power are emphasised, and the case study shows how these ideas relate to the underlying goals of volunteer tourism. The following section discusses the research aim with a perceived future of voluntourism, to emphasise where this field may lead.

#### **6.4 Research Aim**

*Research Aim: How do the experiences of voluntourists compare to the underlying goals of voluntourism, in a selected project in Mainland China?*

The experiences of the voluntourists of a selected case study project in Mainland China can be seen to link with the underlying goals of voluntourism. The underlying goals relate to creating a bond between the people and places involved, through understanding and awareness, while also being significant to the participants. By highlighting and comparing the expectations, motivations and outcomes of the foreign volunteers and AIESEC members, it can be argued that these groups found the project to be significant, as they

believed it was beneficial. One reason for this occurring could have been due to the recommendations from the literature being apparent in the project. Through previous studies of voluntourism, authors such as Raymond and Hall (2008), Wearing and Grabowski (2010) and Coren and Gray (2012) highlight the importance of using a critical understanding of volunteer tourism to emphasise useful ways to improve these projects. These authors have revealed three key findings from their studies on possible ways to improve volunteer tourism. These are the significance of using appropriate foreign volunteers, the importance of the incorporation of the host community, and the relevance of cultural exchange. As these were evident in the case study, the thesis has been able to shed some light on the influence these recommendations can have in the field. However, from the AIESEC case study, additional suggestions will be added to these recommendations from the academic literature.

#### *Additional Recommendations*

The literature surrounding volunteer tourism argues that volunteers need to be appropriate for the projects (Roberts, 2004). As shown, experience, motivation and willingness are key factors that can determine the amount of involvement the volunteer tourist has with the project, which influences the ability to create benefits for others. However, in order to do this, volunteer tourist programs should have a selection process, involving interviews, viewing previous experience and is arranged by the sending organisation and host community, so the most suited volunteers are selected.

Furthermore, the incorporation of the host community is another key factor involved in the success of the project (Wearing & Grabowski, 2010). As shown, if the host community has ownership and control over the decisions of volunteer tourism projects, it can mean these projects are set up where the help is most needed. It can also reduce the risks associated with volunteer tourism, as well as focusing on the potential benefits. However, there should be the incorporation of the sending organisations within the local community. As shown, if the sending organisation is locally based with local and international contacts, it can mean they are better suited to assist the foreign volunteers, as well as interact with the host community. The sending organisation should be the centre players in the design and implementation of the volunteer tourism projects, with close assistance and feedback from both the foreign volunteers and host community.

Finally, the literature highlights the importance of the foreign volunteers learning about the culture of the place they will be staying (Raymond & Hall, 2008). However, there should be greater emphasis on integration into the host community, rather than just focusing on one aspect. This can involve giving the foreign volunteers the opportunity to live with a host family, showing them around cultural, historical and touristic locations by locals and attempting to teach them the language with the help of translators and understanding local customs. In addition, creating friendships and mutual relationships with the sending organisation, host community and wider society can mean the foreign volunteers, as well as the sending organisation and host community, benefit more from their interactions and are more likely to be more involved in the project.

### *The Future of Volunteer Tourism*

There is likely to be continued growth in volunteer tourism projects around the world in the near future. In addition, there is likely to be more young university students and recent graduates who want to participate in these projects, while more sending organisations will be set up to counter this demand. With this growth, the academic focus on this field will continue, but it is likely to contribute to the new optimistic phase. There may come a point where global standards are suggested for the sending organisation, foreign volunteer and host community, which attempts to regulate these projects and rate the projects of various organisations on a basis of their benefits and risks. But in the meantime, if international organisations that are involved in this sector follow the recommendations suggested by the wider literature, it can make these projects beneficial. Furthermore, these projects can improve awareness and understanding around the globe, especially for younger generations, which can improve inequalities and help build connections globally. In summary, the future of volunteer tourism can actively breakdown and unsettle the misunderstandings of people around the world.

*“I hope that interns can correct some of their misunderstandings of China and start to love this imperfect country” (A4, 2013).*

## **6.5 Summary**

The research aim of this concentrated on volunteer tourism projects and was, *How do the experiences of voluntourists compare to the underlying goals of voluntourism, in a selected project in Mainland China?* By focusing on the case study of AIESEC GDUFS, it



can be argued that the GPN project was seen as significant by the participants involved because of the positive results and the expectations of the selected groups matched the outcomes of the project. Although there were negative aspects apparent, it is argued the project was considered to be successful because of the implementations related to the involvement of appropriate foreign volunteers, the incorporation of the host community and a focus on cultural exchange.

In accordance to the academic literature on volunteer tourism, three main recommendations were proposed to these projects. Firstly, a selection process can be used for the participants involved, while focusing on mutual accountability and ownership of the project. Furthermore, it can be argued that the importance of place, identity and power relate to the integration of the participants in the host community and project, which in turn influences involvement in both. Through this, the process of integration may help determine the success of volunteer tourism projects, while the roles of all the members of the program are important in the success of this process.

In summary, it becomes evident that the process of volunteer tourism will continue in the future, and these short term projects can lead to the underlying goals of voluntourism being achieved in the long term. Although there is a greater focus on ways to improve these projects and the potential benefits for those involved, they need to be implemented in the field to have an effect. As the supply and demand of projects and participants increase, there is a greater risk for those who are most vulnerable. Consequently, greater awareness and understanding of these projects for the potential foreign volunteers, sending organisations and host communities are needed to ensure the most appropriate projects are implemented and selected.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion**

This thesis has explored the field of volunteer tourism and argues these projects can be beneficial for all participants involved. Volunteer tourism is a relatively new field that involves a range of different projects, individuals, organisations and ideas. However, the underlying understanding of this field has its roots in early colonialism and development, and has been formed through the interaction of volunteering and tourism. In recent years, it has grown in significance around the globe as more participants have been involved, including foreign volunteers, host organisations and target audiences. However, this growth has also fuelled an underlying debate on outcomes of volunteer tourism projects on the individuals involved.

During the early phase of study on volunteer tourism, authors suggested the foreign volunteers would gain a range of beneficial skills, while being able to experience a new and exciting world, and thus could grow as a person. Despite this, there was a change to a more critical perspective as the post development critique of volunteer tourism grew. This literature highlighted there were a number of risks involved with volunteer tourism projects, especially with regard to the target audiences. Studies emphasised how host communities were being exploited for the gain of the foreign volunteers and invaluable projects were being set up by sending organisations in places that would yield the highest number of foreigners, regardless of what the locals thought. Although there are a number of disagreements between the two sides of the debate, both viewpoints are important because they highlight the evolving extent of the field of volunteer tourism, while emphasising the possible outcomes for all participants involved.

Recently there have been suggestions for improving voluntourism projects that have come from this critical viewpoint, which have focused on achieving the underlying goals of voluntourism, which is, being significant and creating a connection between the people and places. Authors such as Raymond and Hall (2008), Wearing and Grabowski (2010), and Coren and Gray (2012) highlight the importance of using this critical understanding of volunteer tourism, and using it in a useful way to improve these projects. This is the literature this thesis draws most from. These authors have revealed three key findings from their studies on possible ways to improve volunteer tourism, which are a main focus point of this thesis. These are the significance of using appropriate foreign volunteers, the

importance of the incorporation of the host community, and the relevance of cultural exchange.

The thesis focuses on AIESEC, an organisation that is involved in sending individuals around the globe to volunteer in locally based projects. Because of my connections and previous experience with this organisation, and the growing number of voluntourism projects in Mainland China, I used AIESEC GDUFS in Guangzhou as a case study. In order to conduct research for this thesis, I volunteered in the Green Power Now project, and used surveys, interviews and personal observations to highlight the outcomes of this project on the foreign volunteers, sending organisation and the host community. Because a main aim of the thesis was to inform the work of AIESEC, I implemented a participatory focused framework that concentrated on the views of the participants. This was to ensure the perspectives of the individuals involved were the main building blocks for the findings of the project.

The main focal point of the thesis was to concentrate on the involvement in the GPN project, by highlighting the expectations and outcomes for the foreign volunteers and, AIESEC members involved. By doing this, it became evident the expectations and outcomes could be divided into four main categories: those related to the project; social relationships; cultural exchange; and personal development. The findings revealed there were a range of expectations for each group, but they all related to the four main aspects. Furthermore, there were no major differences between the two groups. Despite this, the expectations did centre on AIESEC and the foreign volunteers had a number of expectations for this organisation and vice versa.

In addition, the outcomes showed a similar pattern to the expectations. The outcomes for the groups were related to the four main categories, and it became evident there were a number of potential benefits for the participants involved that matched the expectations highlighted previously. Despite the negative outcomes apparent, there was an attempt to minimise them through the active involvement of AIESEC. Consequently, it was argued that the GPN project was considered to be significant by the participants involved, because of the similarities between the expectations and outcomes.

By focusing on the expectations and outcomes of the GPN project with regards to the overall success of the project, a number of key findings became evident. Firstly, it can be argued that the project was seen as significant by the foreign volunteers and AIESEC

members involved. However, it also highlights how there was a focus on using appropriate foreign volunteers, incorporating the host community and facilitating cultural exchange, being apparent and influencing the success of the project. This was the focus of the third research question. Firstly, a selection process was used for the foreign volunteers and the members of the sending organisation. Furthermore, there were open discussions and communication with all the participants involved, and there was awareness of the expectations. Finally, cultural exchange was implemented by the sending organisation for the foreign volunteers, and involved learning about the host society, the way of life, and being able to share aspects of their own culture with locals. Consequently, it can be argued these three components contributed to the overall success of the project. However, it was also noted that the active involvement of the participants influenced the degree of benefits, and there was diversity between the individuals within each group.

The apparent importance of the three recommendations suggested by the literature on the outcomes of the project can be linked to the underlying goals of voluntourism. It is evident the idea of integration can be a key concept to highlight the connection and understanding created between the groups, which influences the involvement in the project. This is through recognising the importance of place to all participants, the identity of the foreign volunteer and how they relate to place and the members of that place, as well as the power relationships that exist, with a focus on multiculturalism. Consequently, equal relationships can be formed, which are strengthened by mutual accountability and ownership of the project for both the sending organisation and host community. By observing and making links to the process of integration of the foreign volunteer into the host society during the GPN project, it can make the project more meaningful for all participants involved, which can lead to greater participation, as well as more beneficial outcomes for all.

Furthermore, the focus on the GPN project gives insight into the understanding of volunteer tourism. As discussed, volunteering can involve a one way relationship as only one group is perceived to benefit, while the other is involved without any form of compensation. However, this does not challenge the stereotypes and unequal power relationships that exist. This is because volunteers are put in the position of power over the host communities and do not require or want help from the locals. Despite this, it is argued the tourism aspect of voluntourism means the foreigners expect assistance from local citizens, and are involved in visiting and learning about the country. This is because the

foreign volunteers and sending organisation realise they lack knowledge due to their positionality, which restricts their degree of integration and involvement in the project. Consequently, by seeking knowledge from the host community, it can actively unsettle the power relationships that exist, leading to greater awareness and understanding of the participants involved, which contributes to the overall success of the project. These contribute to the recommendations suggested for volunteer tourism projects.

### **Recommendations for Future Volunteer Tourism Projects**

Through the understanding of volunteer tourism and the process of integration, it can be argued that the recommendations from the academic literature, regarding using appropriate participants, the incorporation of the host community and a focus on cultural exchange, has a positive influence on the outcomes of participants involved in the selected volunteer tourism project in Guangzhou. By focusing on AIESEC as a case study for volunteer tourism projects, the following recommendations are made.

1. An in-depth selection process for the foreign volunteers, sending organisation and target audience to ensure appropriate participants are chosen and their expectations are known to all.
2. Use locally based organisations, members and projects that have a strong relationship with the host community and target audience.
3. Focus on integrating the foreign volunteers and sending organisation into the host community and target audience by focusing on social relationships and cultural exchange.

As the academic literature continues to focus on ways to improve voluntourism projects to be beneficial for the participants involved, it is likely future research will focus on further recommendations and improvements of this field, in addition to a more critical and balanced understanding of the previous findings highlighted in this field. Through these realisations and by recognising the importance of understanding the aspects involved in volunteer tourism, as well as relevant fields, it is likely this knowledge will continue to improve the types of programs being implemented, as the number of projects continue to grow around the world annually, because of the supply and demand of the actors involved.

Prior to writing this thesis, I shared a close relationship with AIESEC and this has influenced the approach of my research. Because I have been involved with this

organisation and have participated in volunteer projects in a number of local committees in recent years, I have developed a certain perspective on this field. Firstly, I am not a member of AIESEC, but I have obtained certain insider characteristics as a result of my interactions with its members. Due to my experiences, it is correct to assume I view volunteer tourism projects in a positive light, while believing there are ways to improve them for the benefit for all participants.

However, despite this influence, the case study used does argue against some of the academic literature founded in the critical perspective on volunteer tourism. Rather than being exploitative and solely focused on the foreign agency and consumer, this is not always the case, as shown from the GPN project. A post-development viewpoint highlights the importance of multiple truths and outcomes, and this is evident given the vast number of studies on volunteer tourism projects. However, generalisations about their lack of worth are inaccurate, especially views that criticise or favour the entire field of volunteer tourism. Instead, there should be recognition of the diversity of experiences and values that exists in the collection of different volunteer tourism projects around the world. There is no single truth and there is likely to be a range of positive and negative outcomes for all participants involved, but all of these contribute to the experience of volunteer tourism, which can be seen as overall beneficial. As a result, there should be a focus on the individual benefits and the participant's views of the significance of the projects, with a focus on improving these programs and using feedback and communication as a key way to do so. Consequently, volunteer tourism can be another option to improve the wellbeing of a community that uses a participatory approach, in a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected.

*“We hope that every exchange can strengthen the link between China and the world. To let people know more about China ... instead of misunderstanding it” (A2, 2013).*

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## Chapter Nine: Appendix

### 9.1 Human Ethics Consent



#### HUMAN ETHICS COMMITTEE

##### *Application for Approval of Research Projects*

**Please write legibly or type if possible. Applications must be signed by supervisor (for student projects) and Head of School**

**Note:** The Human Ethics Committee attempts to have all applications approved within three weeks but a longer period may be necessary if applications require substantial revision.

#### **1. NATURE OF PROPOSED RESEARCH:**

(a) Student Research

(b) Degree: Masters of Development Studies.

Course Code DEVE592

Project Title: The Possible Outcomes on Participants involved in AIESEC Projects using Foreign Volunteers in Guangzhou, China.

(c) INVESTIGATORS:

(a) Principal Investigator

Name: Kirk McDowall

Email address: kirk.mcdowall@vuw.ac.nz

School/Dept/Group: School of Geography, Environment and Earth Sciences

(b) Other Researchers          None

(c) Supervisor (in the case of student research projects)

John Overton

#### **2. DURATION OF RESEARCH**

(a) Proposed starting date for data collection: 13<sup>th</sup> May 2013



(**Note:** that NO part of the research requiring ethical approval may commence prior to approval being given)

(b) Proposed date of completion of project as a whole: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2014

### **3. PROPOSED SOURCE/S OF FUNDING AND OTHER ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

(a) Sources of funding for the project

Please indicate any ethical issues or conflicts of interest that may arise because of sources of funding e.g. restrictions on publication of results

None - Self-funding

(b) Is any professional code of ethics to be followed Y ☐ N ☒

If yes, name

(c) Is ethical approval required from any other body Y ☐ N ☒

### **4. DETAILS OF PROJECT**

Briefly Outline:

(a) The objectives of the project

To highlight the various outcomes projects that incorporate foreign volunteers may have on all participants involved, in local primary and high schools in Guangzhou, China. Furthermore, how this case study relates to the wider literature.

(b) Method of data collection

Two rounds of focus groups and/or informal interviews with the foreign volunteers, members of the organisation in charge and the teachers of the schools, at different phases of the project. These will be recorded through the use of audio recorders and notes. Furthermore, feedback surveys given to students involved in the project and conducted by AIESEC (the organisation involved in the projects), will be analysed, while literature will be analysed throughout the project. Because the research will be conducted in China, consideration must be taken throughout my time there, and I need to be aware of cultural and social aspects. I will be able to seek advice from certain members of AIESEC who assist the foreign volunteers, if issues arise.

(c) The benefits and scientific value of the project

There has been a steady growth of foreign volunteers being involved in projects around the world; however the majority of academic studies have focused on the volunteers, rather than the local communities. This research aims to contribute to the debate of the positive and negative impacts foreign volunteers may have, build on the current literature in this

field, and open up research on AIESEC (the organisation that arranges these projects) as well as on foreign volunteers in Mainland China.

#### (d) Characteristics of the participants

The foreign volunteers are all university students, aged from eighteen to twenty-five, come from various countries around the world and can speak English. The local AIESECers (members of the local organisation) are all university students, aged from eighteen to twenty-five, can speak English, come from different parts of China and the Team Leader has been involved with this organisation for over two years. The teachers are native Chinese, have been working in the education sector for at least five years and can speak English. The students from the different schools are aged from twelve to eighteen, native Chinese and can speak varying degrees of English.

#### Method of recruitment

The Green Power Now project organised by AIESEC GDUF, running from May to June 2013, has been chosen as a case study for the thesis because I will be involved in it. In terms of recruitment, I will invite the three other foreigners involved in this project to do three rounds of interviews, after giving them the information and consent forms.

I will invite members of AIESEC involved in organising the project, namely the Team Leader and five Team Members, as well as the AIESEC buddies, to participate in the research as well. I will give them the information and consent forms if they agree to participate.

The project will be involved with one local primary and two local high schools in Guangzhou, teaching in one class per week at each school. I will ask the teachers of these classes and those in contact with AIESEC if they want to participate in the research. I would have a meeting with the teacher and discuss my research focus, and give him/her the information and consent sheets that have been translated into the local dialect, as well as ask members of AIESEC to assist me in answering any concerns posed.

Finally, AIESEC gives out anonymous feedback surveys on the classes to the students involved in the project. AIESEC has given me permission to obtain a copy of these after the project. I will ask a member of AIESEC to translate these to English, and would analyse them. If possible, I would ask if questions on the student's expectations, likes and dislikes about the class could be added, if this has not been done so. These surveys are given out either after each class, or at the end of the project. Because AIESEC has gained permission from the school and parents for the students to fill out these forms, I have not included consent forms or information sheets for the parents or students, instead I will use the surveys AIESEC collects.

Payments that are to be made/expenses to be reimbursed to participants

Gifts and souvenirs from New Zealand

(e) Other assistance (e.g. meals, transport) that is to be given to participants

None

(f) Any special hazards and/or inconvenience (including deception) that participants will encounter

None

(g) State whether consent is for (delete where not applicable):

- (i) the collection of data
- (ii) attribution of opinions or information
- (iii) release of data to others

The release of data refers to the identity of the participant used in the thesis

- (iv) use for a conference report or a publication

Attach a copy of any questionnaire or interview schedule to the application

(h) How is informed consent to be obtained (see sections 4.1, 4.5(d) and 4.8(g) of the Human Ethics Policy)

- (i) the research is strictly anonymous, an information sheet is supplied and informed consent is implied by voluntary participation in filling out a questionnaire for example (include a copy of the information sheet) **Y** ☐ **N** ☒
- (ii) the research is not anonymous but is confidential and informed consent will be obtained through a signed consent form (include a copy of the consent form and information sheet) **Y** ☐ **N** ☒
- (iii) the research is neither anonymous or confidential and informed consent will be obtained through a signed consent form (include a copy of the consent form and information sheet) **Y** ☒ **N** ☐
- (iv) informed consent will be obtained by some other method (please specify and provide details) **Y** ☐ **N** ☒

With the exception of anonymous research as in (i), if it is proposed that written consent will not be obtained, please explain why

In the consent form, participants will be given the option to have their identity confidential and anonymous or allowing their identity to be used in the thesis.

(i) If the research will not be conducted on a strictly anonymous basis state how issues of confidentiality of participants are to be ensured if this is intended. (See section 4.1(e) of the Human Ethics Policy). (E.g. who will listen to tapes, see questionnaires or have access to data). Please ensure that you distinguish clearly between anonymity and confidentiality. Indicate which of these are applicable.

- (i) access to the research data will be restricted to the investigator Y ☐ N ☒
- (ii) access to the research data will be restricted to the investigator and their supervisor (student research) Y ☒ N ☐
- (iii) all opinions and data will be reported in aggregated form in such a way that individual persons or organisations are not identifiable Y ☐ N ☒
- (iv) Other (please specify)

(j) Procedure for the storage of, access to and disposal of data, both during and at the conclusion of the research. (see section 4.12 of the Human Ethics Policy). Indicate which are applicable:

- (i) all written material (questionnaires, interview notes, etc) will be kept in a locked file and access is restricted to the investigator Y ☒ N ☐
- (ii) all electronic information will be kept in a password-protected file and access will be restricted to the investigator Y ☒ N ☐
- (iii) all questionnaires, interview notes and similar materials will be destroyed:
  - (a) at the conclusion of the research Y ☐ N ☒
  - (b) two years after the conclusion of the research; or Y ☒ N ☐
- (iv) any audio or video recordings will be returned to participants and/or electronically wiped Y ☒ N ☐
- (v) other procedures (please specify):

If data and material are not to be destroyed please indicate why and the procedures envisaged for ongoing storage and security

Data and material will be kept secured by the researcher and access restricted to him, in a locked file and password-protected computer, for two years after the thesis has been submitted (if participants agree). This will be to aid any future research on this topic done by the researcher.

(k) Feedback procedures (See section 7 of Appendix 1 of the Human Ethics Policy). You should indicate whether feedback will be provided to participants and in what form. If feedback will not be given, indicate the reasons why.

Participants are welcomed to receive feedback during the writing phase of the thesis (July to February) through email updates and/or an electronic copy of the thesis after it has been submitted and marked. They will have the opportunity to ask for either one on the consent form. If teachers ask for feedback, I would ask members of AIESEC to translate brief updates (because longer updates may be too much of a burden to translate regularly) that can be printed (with monetary compensation to the person printing) and handed out. I will also aim to get the final thesis translated into the local dialect in Wellington, and hard copies can be sent to the schools and AIESEC GDUFS if wanted.

(l) Reporting and publication of results. Please indicate which of the following are appropriate. The proposed form of publications should be indicated on the information sheet and/or consent form.

- |       |   |  |
|-------|---|--|
| (i)   | publication in academic or professional journals<br>(potentially)                       | Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (ii)  | dissemination at academic or professional conferences                                   | Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (iii) | deposit of the research paper or thesis in the University<br>Library (student research) | Y <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (iv)  | other (please specify)  | Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Signature of investigators as listed on page 1 (including supervisors) and Head of School.

**NB: All investigators and the Head of School must sign before an application is submitted for approval**

.....  
Date.....

.....  
Date.....

.....  
Date.....

Head of School:

.....  
Date.....

Phone 0-4-463 5676  
Fax 0-4-463 5209  
Email Allison.kirkman@vuw.ac.nz

## MEMORANDUM

TO	Kirk McDowall
COPY TO	John Overton
FROM	Dr Allison Kirkman, Convener, Human Ethics Committee
DATE	30 May 2013
PAGES	1
SUBJECT	<b>Ethics Approval: 19772</b> <b>The possible outcomes on participants involved in AIESEC</b> <b>Projects using foreign volunteers in Guangzhou, China</b>

Thank you for your application for ethical approval, which has now been considered by the Standing Committee of the Human Ethics Committee.

Your application has been approved from the above date and this approval continues until 28 February 2014. If your data collection is not completed by this date you should apply to the Human Ethics Committee for an extension to this approval.

Best wishes with the research.

Allison Kirkman  
Human Ethics Committee

## 9.2 Information Sheet, Consent Form and Confidentiality Agreement

To whom it may Concern,  
30/04/2013

This is an information sheet regarding the research which will be conducted by Kirk McDowall in association with Victoria University of Wellington from May to June 2013. Kirk is currently completing a Masters in Development Studies and is writing a thesis on international volunteers and the outcomes that may become apparent from project that use these volunteers. The thesis will focus on an AIESEC project, Green Power Now, organised by the Guangdong University of Foreign Studies Local Committee in Guangzhou. The Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee has approved this thesis and research.

The project runs from May 5<sup>th</sup> 2013 to June 20<sup>th</sup> 2013, and during this time, Kirk will be collecting data at the beginning and end of the project. The role and expectations of participants differ due to certain conditions. Surveys, informal interviews and/or discussions will be conducted with the foreign volunteers and members of AIESEC of the project, each estimated to last thirty minutes. All participants need to read and sign a consent form. Participants have the right to check the notes and may withdraw from this study at any time before 15<sup>th</sup> August 2013 without providing reasons. If this were to occur, all data supplied by this participant would be destroyed and removed from the thesis.

All research notes and recordings will only be seen or heard by Kirk and in some cases his supervisor, John Overton. On your consent form you may choose for your identity to remain anonymous and confidential, or for your identity to be used in the thesis. All research data will be kept in a secure room and secure laptop by Kirk until the thesis has been submitted. After this, the data will be kept for two years by the same method by Kirk in order to aid any further research, unless the participant chooses to have their information destroyed.

If accepted, the thesis will be stored at a Victoria University library and will be available to other postgraduate students and staff. There is also the possibility of the results being published to the public, in the form of an academic article or by other means. Participants can select if they agree for their identity to be used in these possible future reports. Feedback will also be provided to all participants if they want it. This can be in the form of email updates in English or Cantonese during the writing phase of the thesis (July to February 2014) and/or with an English or Cantonese copy (electronic or hard copy sent to AIESEC GDUFS) of the thesis after it has been submitted and marked.

Name of researcher: Kirk McDowall  
Overton  
Email: [kirk.mcdowall@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:kirk.mcdowall@vuw.ac.nz)  
Phone: +64 27 3757 431 (New Zealand) or  
+86 135 2772 9485 (China)

Name of supervisor: John  
Overton  
Email: [john.overton@vuw.ac.nz](mailto:john.overton@vuw.ac.nz)  
Work phone: +64 (04) 463 5281

Thank you for your time and consideration

Yours sincerely

Kirk McDowall



## Consent Form

To whom it may Concern,

This is a consent form to participants involved with research conducted by Kirk McDowall, a Masters of Development Studies student at Victoria University of Wellington. Please read this form carefully and only sign the form once you have understood and agreed to the following statements.

I have been provided with adequate information relating to the nature and objectives of this research project, I have understood that information and have been given the opportunity to seek further clarification or explanations. I understand how these surveys, discussions and/or interviews will be used, and I agree for my answers and opinions to be used in the research thesis, either giving consent to use my identity or remaining anonymous.

I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time before 15<sup>th</sup> August 2013 without providing reasons. If this were to occur, all data supplied by this participant would be destroyed and removed from the thesis if requested. Please notify the researcher if you would like to withdraw. I understand I have the right to check the notes, and may have my discussions removed from the research notes if I change their mind afterwards.

Please check how you want the information given to be used:

- ☐ I want my identity to remain confidential and anonymous to other participants as well as in the thesis and/or any future reports based on this data (delete as appropriate), OR
- ☐ I consent to my identity to be in the thesis and/or any future reports based on this data (delete as appropriate).
- ☐ I would like to receive updates by email during the written phase of the thesis and/or an electronic copy of the final thesis after it has been submitted and marked (delete as appropriate). If so, please supply your email address to the researcher.
- ☐ I would like my personal information and data to be kept for two years after the final thesis has been submitted to aid any further research conducted by Kirk and then destroyed (if this is not ticked, your personal information and data will be destroyed after the final thesis has been submitted).

I, \_\_\_\_\_, agree to take part in this research.

Signed (participant):

Date:

Signed (researcher):

Date:





## Confidentiality Agreement

To whom it may Concern,

It is acknowledged that the data and identity of the interviews and surveys that will be translated are confidential if not said otherwise, and the translator must keep this confidential and anonymous. The translator agrees not to disclose any confidential information to others without permission from the researcher, Kirk McDowall.

Translator

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Researcher

Name:

Signature:

Date:

## 9.3 Surveys

### 9.3.1 Foreign Volunteers

Name:	
Age:	
Country and University:	
Degree:	
Year of study:	
Languages (native, excellent, intermediate, beginner):	
How long will you stay in China for?	
Which visa did you get?	

- 1) Do you have a current part-time job in your home country? If so, what is it?
- 2) Have you had any teaching experience, or in related fields, prior to this project? If so, what and for how long?
- 3) Have you been to China before? If so, for how long, what purpose and how long ago?
- 4) Prior to coming to China, what did you learn about Guangzhou and China, in terms of its culture, history or language?
- 5) What were the main reasons why you decided to do an AIESEC exchange and GPN?
- 6) What were the main reasons you decided to come to China for an exchange?
- 7) What are your expectations for the GPN classes? How about in terms of workload, type of classes and interaction with students, teachers, AIESECers and other EPs etc?
- 8) What are your expectations from AIESEC as an organisation? How about in terms of assistance, translating and accommodation etc?
- 9) What are your expectations in regards of cultural experiences (e.g. learning about the culture), what are your views on this? How about your preparation for this?
- 10) What are your plans in China, outside the GPN classes? For example, travelling around China, going to another country, learning the language etc?
- 11) What concerns do you have about the GPN project and living in a new country? How about in terms of accommodation, language barrier, classes, etc?

### Second Part

- 1) How did you find the project?
- 2) What did you learn from the project? How about in terms of personal development?
- 3) Do you believe the project reached your expectations?
- 4) What did you enjoy about the project?

- 5) Did you have any issues with the project? If so, what were they? What was being done as a result?
- 6) How did you find living in China? Any issues regarding the language, food, culture? What was being done as a result?
- 7) Do you believe you were fully prepared to come to China and do this project? What would you want to improve on?
- 8) How do you see yourself? Do you see yourself as a volunteer, tourist or both?
- 9) Anything else to add?

### 9.3.2 AIESEC Members

Name:	
Age:	
Hometown:	
How long have you lived in Guangzhou?	
Current university degree:	
Year of study:	
Languages (native, excellent, intermediate, beginner):	
Position in AIESEC:	
Previous positions in AIESEC:	
Role in regards to GPN:	
Time spent in AIESEC:	

- 1) What is your role in regards to GPN? What does that involve?
- 2) Have you had any teaching or environmental focused experience? If so, what was it?
- 3) What are your goals for the future? What about your goals for future work and study?
- 4) What are the reasons why you are involved in AIESEC? For example English, the experience, social interaction?
- 5) What are your expectations for the GPN project? What do you expect yourself to gain, the EPs to gain and the school to gain?
- 6) What are your expectations of the EPs? What about in terms of work effort, preparation for classes, cultural learning etc?
- 7) What are your expectations of the school? What about in terms of classes, students, planned curriculum, assistance etc?
- 8) How do you see your role in regards of the EPs? What about in terms of getting them settled into the city, accommodation, cultural sharing, translating etc?
- 9) Have you been involved in a GPN project previously? When was this, what was your position and what did your role involve? What are your opinions of the previous project(s)? Have your opinions changed since then? If so, how?
- 10) How do you see the EPs? Do you see them as tourists, as volunteers, or both?
- 11) Anything else to add?