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Class and global citizenship: perspectives from non-elite young people's participation in volunteer tourism

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ABSTRACT

Who is 'the global citizen?'. The ideals of global citizenship surrounding volunteer tourism have come under criticism for being invoked in universalising ways, whilst in fact expressing privilege. The assumption in these critiques of the global citizen as 'western, white, middle or upper class, educated, connected' overlooks the diversification of subjects taking part in volunteer tourism, even as it illuminates that we should question the idea of singular, abstract global citizen. This paper – drawing on research with trips run by youth groups based on UK council estates travelling to sub-Saharan Africa – uses perspectives on classed experiences of volunteering to offer some provocations. Firstly, it argues that it is inadequate to invoke a homogeneous figure of the 'privileged volunteer'. Secondly, there is need for more work that asks how contemporary imaginings of 'good works' in the global south are constitutive of subjectivities and exert a political force in the global north, in various ways for particularly positioned subjects. The paper argues that for some subjects, popular ideals of 'global cosmopolitan citizenship' are being drawn into longer-standing projects of reform of the national citizen. However, studying volunteer tourism in practice always reveals ambivalent potential for more emancipatory dynamics and expressions of 'cosmopolitan empathy'.

Introduction: a widespread practice, diverse volunteers

The popularisation of various forms of international volunteering, travel and volunteer tourism to the global south has been remarked upon. Commentators note that such trips have become a widespread rite of passage for many young westerners, arguably one pillar of a renewed 'popular humanitarianism' where charitable work in the global south, particularly in Africa, plays a central role in celebrity culture, corporate marketing and aspirational self-presentation on social media (Daley, 2013; Mathers, 2010; Mostafanezhad, 2013). Short volunteering trips from the UK are facilitated by a range of actors including youth groups, schools, religious groups and diaspora associations. Supported by grants and community fundraising activities, a range of young people beyond those who can afford to pay commercial gap year companies are now participating in volunteer tourism or similar forms of transnational mobility.

This paper is based on research with one such set of initiatives within this diversification – short trips initiated by youth groups based on British council estates, travelling to volunteer in sub-Saharan Africa. The paper uses

perspectives on classed experiences of volunteering from this research to offer some provocations to the wider field of scholarship on volunteer tourism as it stands. Firstly, it is inadequate in discussions of volunteer tourism to invoke a homogeneous figure of the 'privileged volunteer'. Secondly, there is need for more work on volunteer tourism that does not just examine and critique the transnational power relations of volunteer tourism in isolation, but asks how contemporary imaginings of 'good works' in the global south are constitutive of subjectivities and exert a political force in the global north (Baillie Smith, 2013), and does so for differently positioned subjects. These provocations draw from – and feed into – theorisations of cosmopolitanism. The volunteer tourists in this research can variously be read as: 'elite cosmopolitans' in terms of enjoying mobility and consuming difference as privileged citizens of western nation-states; 'strategic cosmopolitans' in terms of engaging with the world in ways that respond to the socioeconomic constraints and opportunities they face, and expressing 'cosmopolitan empathy' in terms of making meaningful moves towards respect across difference based on their situated subject

positions. Volunteer tourism can be read as produced by – and producing – multiple and ambivalent iterations of 'cosmopolitan global citizenship'.

Volunteer tourism is imagined to 'do good' in two dimensions – in 'helping people' abroad, and in 'bettering' volunteers as individuals. In the cases of this research, the idea of this double benefit was particularly pronounced – the trips studied are imagined to improve and empower 'urban youth' as well as do 'good work' in the volunteering contexts. The words of a participant and a youth worker, below, indicate there are clearly *classed* meanings to these trips:

> I'm the first person to go Africa in my family so to me that's - everyone says like 'oh who's the first one to go uni'. I don't care […] I'll take Africa all day again. (Danny, Volunteer, aged 18)

> They get this sense of worth from [the voluntary work] … which they haven't got here - they feel second class citizens, they feel useless […] they can't get a job, that if they did get a job they wouldn't be able to do it, wouldn't be able to keep it. So it's about working hard, showing they can do it for themselves, about motivation … (Jason, Youth Worker)

Strikingly, Danny explains that participating in a volunteer tourism trip to Zambia is, for him, a marker of pride and achievement on a par with higher education. Participating in 'global charity' is drawn into his aspirations and efforts towards social mobility within the UK. Youth worker Jason believes that the volunteer tourism trips he runs are effective as they provide young people with a sense of achievement and raised aspirations. He hopes that confidence and motivation will have a powerful impact on young peoples' futures, even he half-acknowledges systemic economic constraints. Jason describes his hopes that volunteer tourism – an activity often thought of as epitomising 'global citizenship', doing good outside the borders of one's own nation-state – will improve young people's sense of inclusion and their participation in the UK political-economy, referring to this in terms of their feelings as 'citizens'. Clearly, volunteer tourism has quite particular meanings for these particularly positioned subjects, meanings in which 'global' activities are drawn into identifications and belongings at other levels.

This perspective poses certain provocations. Firstly, it undermines the assumption that the volunteer is always a stand in for 'privilege'. The vast majority of volunteer tourists *are* privileged in terms of global mobility, wealth and their power to extract symbolic resources from travel to the global south. However, exploring heterogeneous positions and experiences *within* this privilege is important – both empirically, in exploring the

popularisation of volunteer tourism; and also in terms of interrupting the reification of the association between 'westernness' and privilege to uncover dynamics that might form the basis of more ethical praxis (Griffiths, 2017). Secondly, it begs the question of how ideals of 'global citizenship' are being drawn into building subjectivities for variously positioned volunteers in the global north. Our analysis will be limited if we treat 'global' and 'national' identifications and politics as separate objects. Rather, considering how 'global' citizenships and engagements are always mediated by gendered, classed and racialised hierarchies at localised and national levels (Nagar, Lawson, McDowell, & Hanson, 2002) can provide greater insight into the dynamics that drive, undercut or reshape the power relations involved in various forms of volunteer tourism.

This paper will argue that in the initiatives studied, a charitable ideal of 'global engagement' is being drawn in to longer-standing normative projects to reform young working-class people into 'better' national subjects – though young people participate in volunteer tourism in ways that express their own imaginings of global and national politics. In terms of the possibilities for a politics of cosmopolitan empathy, we see both that certain narratives of global 'helping' are entangled with projects of domination and yet that particular, ambivalent and situated politics of empathy across difference are possible. Cosmopolitanism and global citizenships are multiple and have varied effects in different spheres. Exploring this further, I turn to outline some arguments which push us to consider particularity of global citizenships.

The particularity and multiplicity of volunteer tourism's global citizenships

'*The* global citizen' does not exist. He or she is an abstraction. The idea of 'global citizenship' is always doing something *particular*, despite an appearance of universalism. There are multiple and contradictory practices surrounding the idea and to which the label is attached. Many differentially positioned 'global citizens' have belongings shaped by varied, intersecting identifications. These ideas are not new, but here I outline literature which supports these ideas, and why they are an important basis for thinking about volunteer tourism. Much literature on volunteer tourism has at its heart the debate between whether it might cultivate 'global cosmopolitan citizenship' – conceived as values, attitudes and politics of respect and equality across difference (Jeffrey & McFarlane, 2008; Tiessen, 2011) – or whether it is entrenched in 'neo-colonial' relations, in terms of

re-inscribing relationships of dependency and exploitation between former colonial powers and colonies, and the 'global north' and 'global south' more broadly.

On the 'optimistic' side, voices argue that volunteer tourism can be 'an expression and enabler of global citizenship' (Diprose, 2012, p. 5) in terms of tackling cross-cultural stereotypes, building a critical understanding of global inequality and fostering a desire to fight for more equal transnational politics. For instance, Everingham (2015) argues that volunteers at a local organisation promoting language exchange in Ecuador did (though not inevitably) hold critical discourses around development, colonialism and the commodification of volunteer tourism, and experienced feelings of respect, humility and mutuality in the equalising experience of having to speak Spanish. The debate on how to promote such outcomes ranges from emphasising 'well-structured', purposeful volunteering with an explicit emphasis on development education – such as pre-departure training, reflective discussions on social justice, and living and working under local conditions (Diprose, 2012), to suggestions of distancing volunteer tourism from development discourses and emphasising intercultural exchange and solidarity (Palacios, 2010).

On the other side, many strongly conclude that international volunteering is 'neo-colonial' rather than 'globally cosmopolitan'. They see volunteer tourism as based in modernising assumptions of western superiority, and legitimising unskilled young westerners' expertise to 'do development' without attention to skills, sustainability or accountability (Simpson, 2004, p. 683). Critical voices argue that volunteer tourism is reliant on an aestheticisation of poverty as 'authentic' and replaces structural understandings of social justice with depoliticised discourses of individual 'helping'. The focus becomes on volunteer tourists' internal moral transformation, and volunteers' enjoyment is shaped by a sentimental colonial legacy, where needy children epitomise the 'developing world' in need of western help (Crossley, 2012; Darnell, 2011; Mostafanezhad, 2013). Further critiques centre on a reading of volunteer tourism as characteristic of 'neoliberalism': implicated in the broader shift of responsibility for development away from the state to a 'challenge' to be 'tackled' privately and commercially by individuals and corporations (Mostafanezhad, 2013; Simpson, 2005; Sin, Oakes, & Mostafanezhad, 2015). It is read as one facet of 'popular humanitarianism', where 'ethical' products further capital accumulation for multinationals, spectacular events such as Live8 foster consensus that free market capitalism is the 'legitimate' pathway to global justice rather than local activism or alternative transnationalisms (Biccum, 2007), and

celebrity work on 'moral issues' depoliticises western interventions (Daley, 2013).

It feels that there is a stalemate between these polarised viewpoints. Perhaps, if we are interested in 'global cosmopolitan citizenships', returning to some of the debates on cosmopolitanism would be helpful. The concept of cosmopolitanism, though subject to definitional debates, is associated with ideals of cross-cultural respect, a capacity to mediate difference, and politics, identities, and practices that cross boundaries, particularly those associated with the nation-state (Jeffrey & McFarlane, 2008; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002). Political scientists' discussions of 'cosmopolitanism' as a sort of universal ethics based on the equal moral worth of individual human beings have been criticised as having a strong European, enlightenment, secular modernist and colonial character (Calhoun, 2002; Gidwani, 2006; Werbner, 1999). The blindness to the particularity of this vision of cosmopolitanism can lead to a tendency to see the west as the site of rationality and progress. Furthermore, existing work can be congratulatory of 'easy forms' of classed consumption: cosmopolitanism as the preserve of those with the political and economic resources to move with ease and consume global cultures (Calhoun, 2002).

Thus, critiques of ideas of cosmopolitanism as a vehicle for 'individualist aspirations and universalist norms' (Breckenridge, Pollock, Bhabha, & Chakrabarty, 2002) which allow 'western societies [to] rewrite their particularity as universalism' (Hall, 2002, p. 28) mirrors critiques of volunteer tourism as a vehicle for 'neo-colonial' and 'neoliberal' imaginaries of 'global citizenship' (Tiessen, 2011). However, where work on volunteer tourism often stops at this critique, critical literature on cosmopolitanism does not dismiss the idea of cosmopolitanism entirely simply because certain visions of it have been fronts for the promotion of values and identities associated with privilege. Instead, they argued that cosmopolitanisms should be understood as plural, situated phenomena, and seek to uncover how people might think and act 'beyond the local' in varied settings (Breckenridge et al., 2002). Explorations of 'grounded', 'vernacular' and 'subaltern' cosmopolitanisms highlight ordinary people's practices of crossing boundaries of difference through 'cultural repertoires' such as labour rights' movements or transnational religious ties (Lamont & Aksartova, 2002). These studies emphasise that 'cosmopolitan' identities and practices can be a strategic resource: for instance, street peddlers in Barcelona share knowledge in cross-cultural networks about how to 'cross borders' spatially (in their migration journeys) and culturally (in business networks, in sales strategies with different nationalities) (Kothari, 2008). That said,

Datta (2009) valuably cautions against making a classed division between elite cosmopolitanism as 'taste' and working-class cosmopolitanism as 'strategic', arguing that London-based Eastern European construction workers' cosmopolitan attitudes arise from *both* 'survival strategies' and an enjoyment and pleasure in engaging with difference. She advocates for more attention to how cosmopolitanisms are shaped by the configurations of power in highly localised spheres of employment, leisure, and domestic space, which produce different interactions.

These critical explorations of cosmopolitanism are valuable for the study of volunteer tourism for several reasons. They help us ask: what type of cosmopolitanism does volunteer tourism foster? An elitist western consumption of difference which becomes fuel for upwards class mobility in the UK? A situated learning of empathy across difference and learning to think beyond the local? Literature on cosmopolitanism problematises any simplistic image of all-powerful global elites, writing that in practice even 'elites' face vulnerability and partiality in their networks and strategies, and still perform 'cosmopolitanisms' shaped by local particularities (Ley, 2004). This does not dismiss a reading of relative privilege, but does problematize a one-dimensional assumption of an archetypal western volunteers. Secondly, despite the fact that the privileged nature of volunteer tourist mobilities remains relevant, global citizenship is not just the preserve of elites. Work on volunteer tourism needs to get beyond this assumption both empirically – since as outlined above, the practice is popularising – and secondly because it reifies that which it seeks to criticise. Literature on cosmopolitanism highlights both that it is important to take a sharp view of power and privilege in relation to how transnational mobilities are determined, articulated and shape identities – particularly avoiding a vague romanticised view of a world of 'flows' (Gogia, 2006), but also to explore the practices and potentials contained in volunteers' engagements across transnational borders which cut against the grain of the problematic power relations that concern us (Griffiths, 2014).

To do so, it is crucial to analyse volunteer tourism in practice. Or put another way, it is crucial to analyse how the multiple possible cosmopolitanisms of volunteer tourism are shaped by the *particular* configurations of power around *particular* forms of volunteer tourism in a diversified field of actors and initiatives. The polarised visions of cynics or apologists for volunteer tourism can lead to 'erasing the social relations through which subjectivities are produced' (Baillie Smith, Laurie, Hopkins, & Olson, 2013, p. 7; Lorimer, 2010; Sin et al., 2015). 'Neo-colonial' dynamics of domination, or 'neoliberal'

dynamics of commercialisation and individualisation are not the whole story, and play out in relation to particular national, classed, gendered, racialised and religious identities. For instance, several studies explore how 'global' encounters are shaped by, and shape, the contours of national identity. In Mathers' (2010) study of American travellers (volunteer tourists, political tourists and study abroad students) visiting South Africa (for 1 month to 1 year), the 'reverse gaze' and encounters formed a 'contact zone' where, through the sense of being observed and labelled, travellers faced feelings of discomfort and shock at 'seeing' America for the first time as a despised and adored nation. For many this reinforced a drive to inhabit Americanness by enacting responsibility as citizens of a global power through 'saving Africa'. Others explore the work that 'global encounters' do to national identities in intersection with other identifications. Han (2011) argued that South Korean Christian mission volunteers in East Africa acted and understood their actions through a complex 'assemblage' of selective readings of national history, religious theology and development discourses. Baillie Smith et al. (2013, p. 3) also found that faith-based international volunteering in Latin America fostered hybrid 'global' subjectivities shaped by multiple sources such as 'faith-based imaginaries of global community, public imaginaries of development, discourses around the "gap year"'. Volunteers drew on wider templates in articulation with personal narratives to form a cosmopolitanism which 'smoothed over' understandings of injustice, but also contained moments of critical reflexivity.

This review of literature has aimed to show several things. Firstly, critical literature on volunteer tourism points out that the implicit ideal of 'the global citizen' is: 'western, white, middle or upper class, educated, connected' (Tiessen, 2011). This helps us question the idea of singular, abstract global citizen – but still assumes a certain homogeneity to the subject positions of volunteer tourists. Furthermore, as it stands, literature on volunteer tourism remains rather polarised between such critiques and optimistic voices. Work on cosmopolitanism shows that criticism of elitist, universalising ideologies of cosmopolitanism need not lead to a dead end, but interest in how subjects in varied social positions may express multiple forms of cosmopolitanism which that can be elitist, ambivalent, strategic, empathetic and play out through different spaces and practices (Jeffrey & McFarlane, 2008). This pushes us to move beyond simply repeating totalising critiques of an archetypal elite white volunteer enacting 'global citizenship' as a facade for 'neo-colonialism' and 'neoliberalism', and to ask how the idea of global citizenship interacts with particular volunteers' identifications and strategic

navigations of social constraints and opportunities in practice. In other words, wholesale dismissal of volunteer tourism and its visions of 'global citizenship' as always determined by one set of problematic socio-political relations mirrors the universalism it seeks to criticise. Though there might still be much to criticise, it is more interesting to ask how and why the power relations of volunteer tourism play out in particular practices and in relation to particularly positioned subjects. To do so, I now turn to outline the classed projects surrounding the volunteering initiatives in my research.

Global action and classed projects of improvement

This paper is based on research into volunteer tourism trips initiated by council estate based youth groups in London. The youth groups explicitly aimed to work with young people facing socioeconomic vulnerability, and the majority of young participants in the research were framed by youth workers, teachers and local authorities as 'marginalised', 'urban' or 'at risk' in relation to their performance in formal education, residence in low-income households on the estates, proximity to criminal behaviour, and difficult familial situations. Notwithstanding the problematic elision of financial lack with classed and racialised stigma in some of these labels, the overall point is that these trips involved young people positioned very differently to the privileged volunteers whose actions and attitudes are the subject of existing debates. How do volunteer tourism and popular humanitarian imaginaries relate to the subjectivities of those with experiences of exclusion and austerity (Baillie Smith, 2013), who in existing literature are usually framed as being ignored and marginalised by 'spectacles' of global citizenship (Biccum, 2007), the locally-bounded 'other' to the privileged or middle-class 'elite cosmopolitan'? I will first give a little more detail on my data collection before reflecting on how global action and classed citizenships might interact.

I engaged with two main case studies. The first of these was a youth charity, 'Springboard' (n.b. all other organisational and individual names are pseudonyms), based on a council estate in south-west London. As well as work running activity clubs, mentoring programmes and drop-in youth clubs on the estate, overseas trips had been a regular and high-profile strand of the charity's work for nearly 10 years. I accompanied a 10-day trip of theirs to Kenya in February 2013, and interviewed the young participants both before and after the trip. I also undertook weekly participant observation with the charity in London over the course of 14

months, and interviewed youth workers, business funders and young people who had been on trips in past years. The second case study was a youth group from a church, 'Kingsfield Church' based on a council estate in east London. This trip was a one-off initiated by the youth worker. With them, I accompanied a 3-week trip to Zimbabwe in August 2013, and interviewed the young participants both before and after the trip. Beyond the central case studies, I interviewed a number of other key informants and those who had been involved with similar trips. Engaging with young people before, during and after trips provided rich understanding of the way volunteer tourism is framed by collective narratives, *and* plays out through embodied and affective experience, *and* has an extended life through anticipation and memory.

In some ways we might question whether these trips should be defined as 'volunteer tourism'. A much-cited scoping study of volunteer tourism was based on volunteer service organisations (Tourism Research and Marketing [TRAM], 2008), and perhaps small-scale trips initiated by youth groups, schools, religious groups and diaspora associations could be alternatively understood as 'transnational youth work' or 'transnational informal education'. On the other hand, 'volunteer tourism' is a salient label for the trips I studied: they contained a mix of voluntary work and leisure, were short term, and asymmetrical rather than exchange-based. Participants used multiple and shifting framings of the trips, referring interchangeably to 'volunteering', 'mission trips' (in the case of the church youth group) or simply 'holiday' or 'an adventure'. The trips were funded by a mixture of private donations and community fundraising efforts rather than through institutional channels. As in volunteer tourism, they reflected hybrid, popular ideas of doing good which emphasised 'hands-on' helping combined with fun, rather than being tightly defined by state, educational, religious or development-sector visions. Furthermore, the category of 'volunteer tourism' should not be understood as overly coherent, and different initiatives may be shaped to various degrees by ideals such as religiosity, conservation or international development. Therefore, whilst it is worth keeping the distinct characteristics of these trips in mind – as initiatives strongly framed as catalysing 'transitions to adulthood' and fostering particular subjectivities (as explored further in the next section) – I believe the analytical points made from this research are relevant for broader debates on volunteer tourism.

So, definitional disclaimers aside, how can we approach these explicitly classed volunteer tourism initiatives? Broadly, youth travel and volunteering in the global south have been analysed as a practice of

middle-class symbolic distinction in the global north, as travel experiences are collected as markers of taste and distinction (Desforges, 1998; Snee, 2013): a mode of gaining cultural capital that fits into a classed 'economy of experience' in the UK where a 'personality package' (a combination of credentials, 'soft skills', and charisma) becomes a marker of employability (Heath, 2007), and the way that a loosely defined 'global consciousness' is valued by contemporary employers (Baillie Smith & Laurie, 2011; Jones, 2011). So we could say that the initiatives under study widen participation in volunteer tourism as a phenomenon in which spatial mobility is central to social mobility. This reading is one where we can see volunteer tourism as a manifestation of 'cosmopolitanism' as a marker of the elite western subject, free to travel, consume and display knowledge of the world (Calhoun, 2002). On the one hand, therefore, we might argue that these initiatives, despite being expressing western privilege, are also equalising opportunities for young people to gain cultural capital within the nation. On the other hand, we can also argue that they are active interventions to 'improve' certain subjects. Take 'Platform2', a national scheme under the UK's last Labour government – a £10 m DfID-funded programme running from 2008 to 2011 – which aimed to widen participation in international volunteering and build development awareness among 'diverse' sectors of the UK population. Platform2's stated aim to '"unlock the potential" within disenfranchised young adults to "become better global citizens"' (DfID 2008 in Diprose, 2012, p. 3) raises intriguing questions about the relation between classed subjectivities and global action.

Why was it seen as important in Platform2 to encourage disenfranchised young people's 'global citizenships'? Diprose (2012, p. 4) raised the criticism that despite some positive outcomes, there is also the sense that such initiatives aim to 'cast[s] disenfranchised young people as grateful, responsible UK citizens'. Indeed, historical work shows that 'global' orientations have long been part of shaping and disciplining the national citizen. In the UK, both formal and informal education has focussed on 'developing' young people in relation to imagined spaces of empire and nation (Collins & Coleman, 2008; Gagen, 2000; Mills, 2013). Youth movements such as the Scouts were deeply shaped by imaginaries of duty to and in the British empire as they made efforts to 'utilise and prioritise the liminal period of youth as a critical and necessary stage in the life course in which to harness and secure an individual's (future) potential and political capital' (Mills, 2013, p. 123). But more specifically, within Scouting's efforts to shape young Britons' characters, working-class youth were seen as particularly in need of scouting's messages of responsibility, duty and self-regulation (Mills, 2013). Moral education within the nation and imaginings of abroad have long been linked. I turn to explore how this played out in my research now.

Global citizenship and disciplining the national citizen

Encounters with global 'others' achieve work at the interior frontiers of citizenship – such as the boundaries of class – as well as at the outer boundaries of nation (Stoler, 2001). This was highly evident in the cases of this research. In the discourses surrounding the trips, concerns with reforming non-elite young people conceived as 'at risk' or problematic were fused with contemporary popular humanitarian ideals of 'saving the world'. This is evident in the words, below, of a business funder of one of the youth charity, whose idea that the trips help 'change' people' into being 'good citizens' implies that young participants are currently not. These ideas were also to a certain extent internalised by the young participants. Dylan, in a pre-trip interview, expressed the idea that change in his group of friends (referred to at a distance – 'kids') would be driven by gaining 'perspective' about comparative privilege:

> The people that [Springboard, the youth charity] target are the people that are ready to change their life … […] hopefully … they kind of flick over into being a good citizen, so to speak. (Hamish, Springboard Business Funder)

> … the thing that Springboard are doing makes Roehampton a better place – like, taking loads of kids from Roehampton to like, see … places like Kenya … Everyone's going to have a different mindset when we come back. […] I think the way they live over there is going to be so bad. Like, there's just pure poverty over there. (Dylan, Volunteer, aged 16)

In the initiatives this research engaged with, participants saw themselves as becoming transformed subjects: more 'grateful', 'charitable' and 'motivated'. This narrative of personal moral transformation, also observed in work on volunteer tourism with middle-class participants (Crossley, 2012; Darnell, 2011), takes on a different character in relation to differently positioned subjects. There is a heightened disciplinary aspect to the way imaginaries of global charity mesh with longer-standing efforts at reforming young working-class people who are especially subject to heavily moralised inscriptions of adult hopes and fears (Kraftl, 2008; Valentine, 1996).

The normalisation of the idea of a short trip abroad as leading to transformation at home is underpinned by powerful spatial imaginaries of 'here' and 'there'. The belief in the power of the trip rests on the heavy

coding of two spatial contexts – urban London and sub-Saharan Africa – the first pathologised as violent, the second objectified as a space of victimhood and, as expressed Dylan's words, 'pure poverty'. Ideals of improving young subjects are expressed through the assumption that the global south is also in need of improvement (Aitken, Lund, & Kjørholt, 2007). My research strongly confirmed the power of 'neo-colonial' imaginaries in volunteer tourism (Mostafanezhad, 2013) – destinations framed as depersonalised needy spaces, and strong imaginaries of 'Africa' as an object of care, as the locus of shocking poverty, inherent virtue or challenging risk, with an almost complete lack of interest in the history, politics or simply factual knowledge of African nations. The key point here is that these problematic visions were not just evidence of 'western privilege' but also a core underpinning of disciplining particular young subjects within the boundaries of a privileged nation. We might ask then what are the different conditions under which a 'cosmopolitan' interest with the world is framed, and the socio-political milieus that make adopting and performing a certain version of 'cosmopolitanism' make strategic sense for young people.

The most extreme visions of volunteer tourism trips as reforming apathetic, lazy or potentially criminal youth through hard work and a sense of comparative privilege within my research were expressed by Springboard's business funders, wealthy individuals who lived locally to the estate and provided generous and untied financial support, and sometimes more hands-on help – for the youth charity's work. Stephanie, below, talks about her idea of the trips as a sort of 'shock therapy' to make young people realise their comparative privilege and prompting them to work hard, beginning with fundraising efforts and continuing on the trips:

> They … got to see what poverty was really all about, and actually that their lives weren't so bad … yes, they are in the lower, you know, demographic, but […] these guys have a roof over their head, they've got a free education, free NHS … […] Obviously they were made to fundraise in advance … although … I still feel they should be pushed a bit harder. (Stephanie, Springboard Business Funder)

Universalising ideas of Kenya as defined by need and poverty underpin the idea that it is a good backdrop against which to use volunteer tourism as a chance to gain 'perspective' and practice hard work – in other words, to shape ungrateful youth in low-income Britain into the 'deserving poor' who work hard, do not cause problems or see themselves as victims, and are not going to become 'dependent' or feel entitled. It should be noted that these views were not representative of

Springboard youth workers, who had much more generous and holistic views of the young people they worked with. However, these views are worth quoting because they illustrate the logical conclusions of many of the implicit assumptions present in other accounts – including of youth workers and young people – that it is good that the trips help push young people to exert individual efforts at social mobility. For instance, Jacob expresses this idea:

> It kind of helped me realise – I need to step up a bit […] No-one's going to make you … get up and do stuff. You've got to get up and make yourself do stuff. (Jacob, Volunteer, aged 17)

The invocation to self-discipline and motivation contained in these visions of the 'good' volunteer tourism achieves for the participant is problematic as it de-legitimises young people's very real struggles by slotting in neatly with a politics of 'responsibilisation of poverty': the idea that working-class individuals should taking responsibility for their own betterment amid the dismantling of the welfare state (Allen, Hollingworth, Mansaray, & Taylor, 2013).

Thus, in these particularly positioned cases, becoming a 'global citizen' is part of a pressure to become an 'aspirational' citizen within the nation–or put differently, a pressure to adopt a sort of 'strategic cosmopolitanism' shaped by the constraints of classed prejudice. A 'politics of aspiration' has been identified as amplifying disciplinary pressures on working-class and racialised young people to disavow disparaged ways of being an 'adjust themselves' to succeed (Allen et al., 2013; Brown, 2013; Kulz, 2014). Brown (2013) examines how discourses of aspiration education policies focus interventions on working-class young people deemed 'not aspirational enough'. Young people's cultivated ambitions for higher education come into painful conflict with facing the difficulties of the withdrawal of state support (e.g. high university fees) and actually achieving social mobility post-university. An emphasis on aspiration as the driver of social mobility ends up 'locat[ing] the "blame" for disadvantage or inequalities in the outcomes of young people's lives within the (pathologised) working class/minority individual' (Archer, Halsall, & Hollingworth, 2007, p. 562).

In this research, volunteer tourism was drawn into quite intimate re-formations of the self as aspirational. For instance, Richie, below, describes volunteer tourism having prompted him to try to adjust his dress, distancing himself from conspicuous consumption as intersecting with the denigrating label of 'gangster' overlaid on him as a young black man, and communicating 'motivation':

Before the trip … I'd think 'ah I really NEED a new pair of trainers […] but I realise that that's not really doing me anything […] Cos I don't wanna seem as – uh … 'gangster' … I've never dressed like a gangster, but I'm just saying like – I wanna have a new look to me, I wanna look more smart, I wanna look more motivated … (Richie, Volunteer, aged 16)

The ideal that volunteer tourism might foster aspirational and enterprising dispositions, was strongly pronounced in high-profile 'success stories' of ex-drug dealers turned young entrepreneurs – a transformation believed to have been catalysed by volunteer tourism as providing a sort of 'affective energy' of 'adventure' and efficacy ('making a difference'). In these trips, explicit ideas of 'global citizenship' were quite vague, but in practice, relations of charitable care towards infantilised others and active manual labour read as modernising 'development' were central to imaginings of these projects of transforming volunteers into a grateful, hardworking subjects. Other ideas of 'good works' were conceived of as supporting aspiration of those we met, wanting to support those in the destination to sell their wares or use their talents of self-presentation and bodily skill to become entertainers or sports people. These visions were less objectifying of those in the destination, but clearly emerged out of a resonance around aspiration, enterprise and individual responsibility in what it means to make part in global action and the type of economic subjects upheld as ideal.

Furthermore, the aspirational subjectivities that young people returned from trips with included global charity. These were visions of individual capitalist success with a philanthropic edge informed by the 'celebrity-corporate-charity complex' (Brockington, 2014). For instance, Jamie voices dreams of being charitable meshed with dreams of sporting success, where poverty alleviation is achieved through the generous giving of resources from the massive personal wealth of some individuals to other, poor individuals, rather than in strengthening social safety nets, or systems of redistribution:

My dream would be to be a footballer. … partly because the amount of money I'd have … like I could go to Zimbabwe and literally – like, literally just like that – they'd have all the money they need … (Jamie, Volunteer, aged 15)

Thus, the findings from this research can be analysed in line with approaches to volunteer tourism as a 'technology of the self' 'through which subjects constitute themselves simultaneously as competitive, entrepreneurial, market-based, individualised actors and caring, responsible, active, global citizens' (Sin et al., 2015, p. 122).

However, this is not to advocate for readings of volunteer tourism as always or merely 'neoliberal governmentality' in a way that applies a stop-gap analysis that tells us little. Rather, the point is that in this particular setting, the popularisation of doing good abroad has been drawn into pressures on young subjects to take individual responsibility for their own betterment in contemporary Britain. The criticism that comes into stark relief when studying initiatives targeted at working-class youth is that vague ideals of global citizenship are actually preparing young people to be certain types of national citizens, amenable and self-managing amid an insecure and flexible labour market, through encouraging 'enterprising' (overcoming limits, taking opportunities, realising ambitions) subjectivities (Cremin, 2007; Gagen, 2015).

This section has argued that in the initiatives studied, 'global citizenship' is enrolled in a project of classed reform within the nation. This reveals the strong resonances between the neo-colonial expressions of global citizenship often (not inevitably) contained in volunteer tourism and the way certain subjects within the nation are framed as in need of civilisation. Gagen (2007) explores how in early twentieth century USA there was an 'interpenetration' of stories about racialised backwardness in America's imperial territories and America's urban poor children. Casting colonised people as childlike was mirrored by ideas that *all* children were 'primitive' and in need of being 'civilised', underpinning a logic of improvement enacted both overseas and in urban reformers' work to create modern civilised citizens. The trajectory of the improvement in these cases of volunteer tourism were framed within classed ideals of an elite cosmopolitan subjectivity that is very much embedded in western-capitalist engagements global difference. However, young participants did not only adopt the self-disciplining aspirational subjectivities through the volunteer tourism trips, but also made their own meanings around global and national citizenship, and it is to this I turn now.

Non-elite cosmopolitanisms and ongoing potentials of global citizenship

Overall, as demonstrated above, volunteers adopted stories of reform through volunteer tourism into aspirational subjects, speaking to the lack of 'thinkable spaces' for creating a valued self and future amid classed and racialised hierarchies – such as Richie's need to 'adjust himself' to contend with the 'gangster' label. These adjustments can be read as an agentive expressions of determination to survive and thrive amid the withdrawal of social safety nets (Katz, 2001),

even as they 'replenish established power structures' (Jeffrey, 2012, p. 249). However, there were other stories at play, and young people used the experience of volunteer tourism for their own ends, constructing their own meanings (Wood, 2012). In this section I will briefly outline two ways they did so: firstly, by relating to those they met in the destination contexts in ways which contained elements of class-based solidarity, and secondly, by upholding participation in volunteer tourism as proof of their existing virtue rather than their need for reform. These dynamics can be read as testifying to the enduring potential of volunteer tourism to contain potentials for 'cosmopolitan empathy'.

Despite the strength of framings of volunteer tourism described above – as practices of charitable pity and modernising western improvement – young volunteers did express connections with destinations and people within them which ran counter to relations of charitable pity. These were multifarious. Young people engaged in friendly exchanges through ordinary affinities of gender, age and personality, bonding over playing games, football, affectionate insult-trading and gendered humour. Young people with second-generation African heritage expressed claims of special and proud connection to Africa (see Cheung Judge, 2016). Christian religiosity provided a platform for those in the destination context to assert equality and even superiority in ways which undercut dynamics of western charitable virtue. Transnational youth culture – such as pop music, and 'urban' style – provided moments of pleasurable connection which blurred the boundaries of global and local (see Cheung Judge, 2017).

However, perhaps the most interesting way young people expressed desires to connect across transnational boundaries which went against the grain of 'neo-colonial' dynamics in volunteer tourism were connections centred on resonances of economic insecurity and intersectional prejudice, and a spirit of resistance in the face of this. For instance, one young volunteer, whose experience of the educational system had been deeply exclusionary, spoke of 'identifying' with a child who was reputedly 'the bad kid of the school' (Research Diary, Kenya Trip). In Kenya, we volunteered at a home for street children, and I listened to a group of young men from south London talk with awed admiration to one of the older boys there about being chased by the police, street violence and stealing to make a living. In these moments there was an ambivalent mixture of mutual connection and voyeurism (Research Diary, Kenya Trip). On the one hand, there was a bonding over relatable experiences of police aggression, illegal ways of making a living and strong ties of loyalty: a transnational resonance around urban poverty. However,

there were also elements of a fascinated consumption of the young man's life story which contained a sort of appropriation of it as drama on demand rather than as something recognised as having a gravity and particularity of its own which required respect.

However, despite these blurred lines, such connections represent a profound potential for thinking volunteer tourism trips differently: they contain the idea that economic inequality and suffering is not the natural preserve of some regions of the world and not others, and suggest 'helping' could be reimagined as based on solidarity around the relational impacts of inequality. Griffiths (2017) argues for more attention to social class to expose the heterogeneity of north–south relations, in that classed experiences can sensitise us to the pain of unequal opportunities, being assigned social positions, and experiences of exclusion. Whilst relative privilege must be always acknowledged, such resonances may form the basis of speaking *to* not *for*, others. This echoes work by feminist scholars on cosmopolitanism and ethics, which argues that mutual recognition of bodily vulnerabilities, loss and pain may be a basis for an ethics of care which crosses transnational borders (McRobbie, 2006; Mitchell, 2007). In classed experiences of volunteer tourism, we might wonder whether there is scope for young subject to draw on a shared experience of stigmatisation around poverty.

These are only fragments of solidarity, but they do highlight that cosmopolitan global citizenships are not exclusive with other identifications, but rather particular identities – whether religious, gendered, aged or stemming from particular 'urban' contexts – can act as resources in supporting connection to global 'others' (Calhoun, 2002). Furthermore, we can see the performance of cosmopolitanism by those in the destination contexts. For instance, the head of the children's home in Kenya, Joseph, had been a street child in his youth. He told his life story consciously using language to link to the UK-context from which the UK group came: describing himself as from a 'Kenyan council estate', in 'gangs', and 'doing drugs'. Joseph's cosmopolitan mobilisation of vocabularies of street 'realness' was an exertion of authority to actively participate in the 'reform' of the young UK subjects.

These observations also highlight that 'friendship politics' are often the mode through which young volunteers express agentive intentions or attempts to connect across difference (Wood, 2012). I overhead one young man say to a Kenyan young person he met that 'the ghetto is the most welcoming place' and 'my house isn't big, but you could always stay' (Research Diary, Kenya Trip). This statement contains multiple implicit critiques: of classed snobbery, of the elitist forms of

cosmopolitanism, and of the lack of genuine exchange that underpins volunteer tourist flows. Although these moments should not be read as a deeply realigned understanding of global relations (Diprose, 2012), they may be a start.

So, if young people reworked the charitable ideals of 'global citizenship' in the trips through friendship politics, they also engaged with the process in ways which reworked the idea of reforming into better national citizens. Young volunteers talked about how going on the trips gave them a sense of worth, in their own eyes and those of others. Rather than the young people expressing that trips transformed them from 'bad' to 'good' subjects, they celebrated the trips as 'proof' of their pre-existing worth, virtue and abilities in the face of classed and racialised (as intersecting with gendered) prejudice. These expressions were more than just assertions of aspirational subjectivities, rather about using the trips to counteract being seen as defined by classed 'lack'. For Lisa, below, memories become material towards 'seeing herself' as virtuous against internalised judgements of worth based on capital accumulation:

> It makes you look at yourself in a different light, like I'm – not a bad person … makes you feel better in yourself […] older people especially, like, upper class people – can look down on you […] yeah, I don't earn a lot of money, but I've been to Africa, and I've helped people … (Lisa, Volunteer, aged 19)

Clearly, these feelings remain underpinned by ideas of 'helping others' and self-improvement. However, quotes like that of Lisa help us read young people's desires to 'change' not as evidence they fully submit to disciplinary forces that cast them as criminal or apathetic – but as a way to navigate their way blockages to social mobility and of prejudice: volunteer tourism trips being engaged in search of respect.

Conclusion

This paper has shared perspectives from some quite heavily classed experiences of volunteer tourism: initiatives which target 'urban youth'. From this, it has offered some provocations which may be of interest to the wider field of thinking on volunteer tourism. The first of these is to call attention to the diversity of subjects and initiatives engaging in short term, popular forms of mobility from the global north to the global south. Exploring these mobilities in practice reflects the value in interrogating an undifferentiated category of 'western privilege'. Findings from these volunteer tourism initiatives expose the way that for some subjects, popular ideals of global citizenship are drawn into longer-standing projects of

reform of the national citizen. In particular, 'aspirational' performances of citizenship which include aspirations towards a criticized 'elitist, western' version of cosmopolitanism are being inculcated and negotiated through practices of volunteer tourism.

Secondly, these findings point out that particular articulations of 'cosmopolitan global citizenship' do work in different social spheres, including within the nation. Whilst this observation does not directly contradict analyses of 'global citizenship' as a story of formal politics as replaced by consumption-based interactions, it does assert that volunteer tourism is being engaged in struggles over collective politics with a small 'p' within the nation. Volunteer tourism might contain and promote de-politicised understandings of how to achieve social change, but it is still entangled in the politics of social change itself as a practice. The ways that these initiatives are normatively framed as reforming potentially deviant or apathetic youth is one example of the ways that young people are particular objects of adult societies' political-economic concerns (Jeffrey, 2012; Katz, 2008), and asked to become subjects that accede to a flexible, insecure economy. Here, young people's embrace of volunteer tourism can be read in the light of the way that cosmopolitan subjectivities are often a 'strategic' response to socioeconomic contexts and framings. Yet the ways that young people's own intentional acts of empathy across difference or to articulate their own meanings around participating in volunteer tourism can also be read as responses to the political-economic pressures and the social contexts they navigate (Skelton, 2013).

Thirdly, the multiple and contradictory dynamics exposed by studying volunteer tourism in practice points us towards seeing that any potential for 'cosmopolitanism', as an equalising ethics of relating across difference, will always be enfolded in particular social dynamics and may be ambivalent (Jeffrey & McFarlane, 2008). Where some work on volunteer tourism can fall into rather black-and-white polemical statements about whether volunteer tourism is 'all good' or 'all bad', arguably:

> Asking if international volunteering creates cosmopolitans or global citizens provides too rigid and instrumental an approach, focusing attention on a particular status or end point and erasing the social relations through which subjectivities are produced … [this] risks excluding the multiple languages in which global or cosmopolitan subjectivities may be expressed. (Baillie Smith et al., 2013, p. 7)

Perhaps we might better see the 'cosmopolitan' efforts of volunteer tourism as ambivalent, dependent on particular practices: at times an expression of western privilege

to consume difference, at times a 'technology of rule' creating self-regulating subjects who have responsibilities beyond but simultaneously to the nation, and at times containing a currency and potential to encourage lived practices of ethical acts of care, respect and tolerance that are deeply necessary given the many 'structures of violence' in society (Mitchell, 2007). The cases recounted here bring up sharp questions around class – volunteer tourism must be viewed critically where it reinforces classed inequalities, and yet there is potential in widening class participation in volunteer tourism for transnational solidarity and the recognition of the worth and virtue of young subjects who face classed prejudice. Future scholarship must analyse volunteer tourism's potential for 'fostering global citizenship' in the light of how multiple cosmopolitanisms – from the dominant, to the strategic, to the empathetic – are shaped by the particular configurations of power in diverse volunteer tourism initiatives.

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