▲ Hochschule Harz

Bachelorarbeit

TRANSFORMATIVE TRAVEL AND VOLUNTEER TOURISM:

THEIR INTERACTION AND INFLUENCE ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND TOURISTS

angefertigt an der
Hochschule Harz

Fachbereich Wirtschaftswissenschaften

Studiengang: International Tourism Studies

vorgelegt von:

Nora Eva Bentele

Matr.-Nr.: 27827

Benkendorferstr. 4

06128 Halle/Saale

u35328@hs-harz.de

angefertigt bei:

Erstbetreuer

Prof. Dr. Dirk Fischbach

Zweitbetreuer

Peter Stricker

Eingereicht am: 10.05.2023

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NGO .... Non-governmental organization

1 Volunteer Tourism and Transformative Travel: Theoretical Framework and Research Question

About ten million people travel internationally each year to volunteer in communities. The majority of travelers are from Europe and North America, traveling to developing countries. Further, the volunteer tourism industry is growing rapidly and is estimated to be worth two billion US-dollar. (Baumgarten, 2022) Additionally, the demand for transformative travel experiences is increasing. A 2017 SKIFT research indicates the growing demand among travelers. The survey, in which 1.350 people participated, shows that 52 % of participants value transformative experiences throughout their trip. (SKIFT, 2018, pp. 5–6)

1.1 Research Question

Some authors began to explore the relationship between transformative travel and volunteer tourism. For instance, Coghlan and Gooch explored how transformative learning can be used within volunteer tourism experiences. They were able to connect the dimensions of the theory (see: pp. 5-6), which play a part within transformative travel, with volunteer tourism experiences. (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 880) The purpose of this paper is to investigate the relationship and interaction between transformative travel and volunteer tourism as well as their influences on the most significant stakeholders, host communities and tourists. It aims to discuss how volunteer tourism activities trigger transformations in individuals and local communities.

This paper discusses how volunteer tourism projects influence local communities and travelers to change, both positively and negatively. Also, it will highlight how both concepts can be implemented in local communities in a sustainable manner.

The purpose of the paper is to address the research question using the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: *"Volunteer tourism projects trigger transformations."*

Hypothesis 2: *"Transformative travel and volunteer tourism have positive and negative influences on the involved stakeholders[1]."*

Hypothesis 3: "*Transformative travel and volunteer tourism are sustainable practices."*

The paper first addresses the theoretical basics of transformative travel and volunteer tourism. After the theories are defined, the focus will be on the influences of both concepts on local communities and tourists. The subchapters are both structured into positive and negative influences. Additionally, the research on local communities is disclosed, and the types of tourists are defined. Moreover, the interaction of the concepts during their implementation is disclosed throughout the entire chapter. Subsequently, the influence of sustainable practices and the role of organizations in volunteering and transforming experiences are discussed. Lastly, the paper offers a summary and a prospect for future research on the topic based on the covered input.

1.2 Theoretical Framework of Concepts

First a look at the theoretical framework of both concepts within existing literature. Traveling allows a person to gain new perspectives and is a carrier of transformative settings. Often, transformations are a result of living through new experiences. (Wolf et al., 2017, pp. 4–5) The concept of transformative travel is defined by SKIFT as "*(...) any travel experience that empowers people to make meaningful, lasting changes in their lives, whether big or small*" (SKIFT, 2018, p. 4). Even though the concept has long been known in the tourism sector, it was brought further into focus by the Transformational Travel

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[1] Only including local communities and tourists.

Council, founded in 2016 (SKIFT, 2018, p. 4). Additional studies and literature focus increasingly on transformative travel as a tourism concept. The change in focus can be explained by how transformative travel experiences affect individuals and their consumption patterns. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 8) Transformative travel is focused on thoughtful traveling that might trigger life-changing experiences. Such experiences can vary from trekking in the mountains, traveling solo for the first time, or staying home and trying new activities. (SKIFT, 2018, p. 4)

Transformative travel, also known as transformative tourism[2], is separated from other tourism forms since it concentrates on causing behavioral and attitude changes (Soulard et al., 2021, p. 923). Further, its purpose of self-exploration and self–actualization differentiate transformative travel from other tourism forms (Sheldon, 2020, p. 3). It allows an individual that participates in transformative travel experiences to change and evolve personally. (Wolf et al., 2017, pp. 4–5)
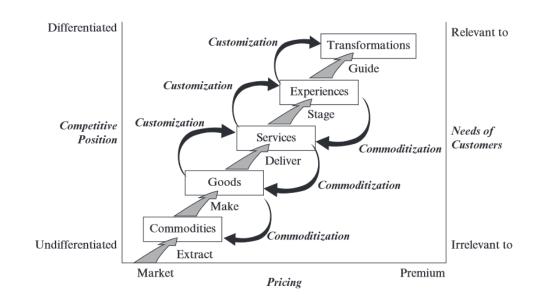
Figure 1 The Progression of Economic Value by Pine (2013)

Source: Pine II, B. J. & Gilmore, H. J., 2013, p. 27

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[2] Within this paper, the term transformative travel will be used.

One theoretical approach to transformative travel is provided by Pine and Gilmore. Various authors base their literature on their model of "The Progression of Economic Value" (Figure 1). The base of the model is the fundament of the experience economy. It shows how commodities are extracted, which are used to make goods. The delivery of goods is the basis of services, and staging them creates an experience. (Guttentag, 2019, p. 180) Through the process of customization and the guidance within experiences, the model is extended by one additional level: transformation (Pine II & Gilmore, 2013, pp. 26–27). The level of transformation includes those travel experiences that promote self-actualization and behavioral changes (Guttentag, 2019, p. 180). Tourists that desire transformative travel want to take home more than just memories from their trip. They want to experience something that exceeds a simple good or service (Pine II, & Gilmore, 2014, p. 26). It can also be described as a change of focus from esteem to a more self-actualization focus. Gaining approval and recognition from others through products becomes less important than reaching their full potential through the purchase of a product. The tourism product now is not just seen as an object, but viewed as an important part of self-improvement. (SKIFT, 2018, pp. 8–9) Through customization, tourism products and experiences are getting differentiated from other products. They increase in relevance for customers. (Pine II & Gilmore, 2013, pp. 26–27) As mentioned previously, those are experiences that travelers are focusing on increasingly. For this paper, the commoditization process and pricing in Figure 1 are disregarded.

Pala and Cetin (2022) introduce three different types of transformations which have long-term influences on individuals: behavioral transformations, attitudinal shifts, and personality. The first type, behavioral transformations, involves traveling to new places where people break out of their daily lives. By experienceing new activities or behaviors, individuals might change their behavior consistently. For example, they pick up a new hobby or implement a new habit.

Usually, such behavioral transformations contribute to personal, environmental, and social issues. In addition to introducing new habits, existing ones might be discarded (e.g. quitting smoking). The second type of transformation is attitudinal shifts. Those include a change of perspectives in individuals. Examples are lifestyle changes, increased social awareness, or environmental concerns. The third and last type is a change in a person's personality. Since individual personalities are stable, modifications will take longer. Travel experiences are seen as life lessons for travelers which will improve them personally. Characteristics that are developed through travels include an increase in self-confidence, becoming more mindful, or being more tolerant. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, pp. 13–15) Overall, there is no definite type of transformational travel experience since travelers undergo transformations in various ways. For instance, some tourists change by observing cultures unlike their own or exploring remote places. The focus of a transformational journey is the expansion of one's view of the world by embracing once-foreign cultures, places, and people. (SKIFT, 2018, p. 10)

The literature review introduced further theoretical frameworks within transformative travel. One theory is mentioned frequently: transformational learning by Mezirow (1991). The theory focuses on long-term outcomes since experiences can be inspiring and change an individual's perspective. Transformational learning can be defined as an educational approach to provoke a deeper change on a personal and social level. For example, a person changes their job to one that is more fulfilling for them. (Chhabra, 2021, p. 5)

Wolf et al. (2017) developed four dimensions of transformative travel experiences on the basis of Mezirow's transformative learning. The model includes the causes and outcomes of transformative processes. The four dimensions consist of *disorienting dilemma, self-reflection, resolution by exploring new actions, and development of new skills, attitudes and beliefs*. When being in the disorienting dilemma dimension, individuals are challenged with intense and new situations. For instance, with social problems such as extreme poverty.

(Soulard et al., 2019, p. 92) Such moments push travelers out of their comfort zones and cause an evaluation of intrinsic values (Sheldon, 2020, p. 4). Disorienting dilemmas create internal conflicts regarding the situation at hand. In dimension two, self-reflection, those internal conflicts are navigated and explored. Individuals question their worldview and upbringing while simultaneously using self-reflection methods like journaling or conversations. Through that revelation, the desire to change can be reached. Within the third dimension, resolution by exploring new actions, individuals implement changes. For example, a person becomes more active in politics or social matters. Social connections and contacts within this dimension help individuals with implementing and applying new actions. Lastly, the development of new skills, attitudes and beliefs intends for individuals to adopt new changes and broaden their worldview. (Soulard et al., 2019, p. 92)

The other concept that will be highlighted within this paper is volunteer tourism, also known as voluntourism[3]. Volunteer tourism is a niche form of tourism and is seen as an alternative to mainstream tourism experiences. There is no clear placement of the term within literature as some view it as a part of ecotourism, while others view it as a form of new moral tourism. Regardless of the placement in tourism categories, the focus remains on the social characteristic of traveling. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 121) One definition of volunteer tourism is given by Wearing: "*(…) those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment*" (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, pp. 120–121). A similar definition by Clemmons was one of the first definitions of the term volunteer tourism in mainstream media: "*(…) [volunteer tourism is, i.e. author] the conscious, seamlessly integrated combination of voluntary service to a destination and the best, traditional elements of travel – arts, culture, geography, history and recreation – in*

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[3] Within this paper, the term volunteer tourism will be used.

that destination." (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, pp. 120–121). As this definition captures the essence of the concept of volunteer tourism, it is used as the basis of this paper. The focus of volunteer tourism can vary from environmental, socio-cultural, and economic significance. Examples of volunteer tourism projects are conservation activities; including environmental protection projects, and socio-cultural and economic activities such as building schools and restoring physical resources. (McGehee & Andereck, 2009, p. 39)

In literature, the so-called "rites of passage" framework is in place, which is used to determine the transformation of volunteer tourists. For the most part, the framework is found within an anthropology context in which it discusses how rituals allow a person to transform. However, it has also been used within various other contexts such as tourism experiences. The "rites of passage" is divided into three phases by Van Gennep. The first phase is the rites of separation. Within this phase, the individual is detached from their current position and identity. The second phase, transition rites, concentrates on gaining a new identity. It is the suggestive phase of the transition. The third and last phase is the rites of incorporation. Here the individual is reintegrated back into their community. (Magrizos et al., 2021, pp. 880–881)

In comparison with other alternative tourism forms, volunteer tourism is growing rapidly. To cater to the demand of travelers, volunteer tourism organizations offer the chance for new experiences by encountering unknown situations and expanding travelers' comfort zones. By experiencing these new situations, travelers are undergoing transformational experiences. (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 878) Volunteer tourists often desire to experience rare situations in hopes of growing and actualizing themselves (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 881). Through that volunteer tourism can be linked with the concept of transformative travel. Volunteer tourists are looking for possibilities to experience memories that will impact them long-term. They value such lasting changes. In literature, the act of volunteering is associated with humanitarian activities as well

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as its chance for self-development (Wolf et al., 2017, p. 19). It is also recognized by literature, that niche tourism, such as volunteer tourism, can create the needed setting that triggers transformational experiences (Chhabra, 2021, p. 3). Within transformative travel, tourists often have the desire to give back to others. That desire increases while undergoing inner transformation. Volunteer tourism projects offer such opportunities to engage with others and contribute to making a change. (Sheldon, 2020, p. 7, 2020, p. 4)

2 Influences and Interaction of Concepts on Local Communities and Tourists

Within literature, the influence of transformative travel has not been defined clearly in regards to the types of experiences and effects it will have on individuals. However, various studies have been conducted to reach a possible conclusion. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, pp. 15–16) They established that the concepts of transformative travel and volunteer tourism both influence local communities that host volunteer tourists as well as the travelers themselves. Moreover, both concepts can interact and engage with each other. While volunteering, the tourist has the possibility to transform themselves and the environment they engage in. For instance, by understanding the cultural differences of the host community and their position in the community, benefits such as poverty alleviation can be managed. (Wolf et al., 2017, pp. 10–11) The more a product or experience is customized, the higher the possibility, that the trip will transform an individual. That is because the experience provides precisely what the individual needs. That effect can be comprehended through the model of "The Progression of Economic Value" by Pine (see: subchapter 1.2, pp. 3-4). It demonstrates the customization process and its outcomes. Tourism companies can create this kind of transformation through the customization of their offered experiences. (Pine II & Gilmore, 2014, p. 26)

2.1 Research on Influences on Local Communities

Research and literature have generally studied the attitudes of residents towards tourism in a destination. It is a topic that has been analyzed in many research studies regarding mass tourism and the attitudes of residents using various measures. Yet, the influence of volunteer tourism on the attitudes of residents has been explored rarely. (McGehee & Andereck, 2009, pp. 40–41)

As often within tourism research and literature, the local community of a destination is at the bottom of the hierarchy, which results in an under-researched group of tourism stakeholders (Lee, 2020, pp. 1–2). A niche form of tourism is volunteer tourism, which complicates research. Wearing and McGehee (2013) identify the following challenges for researchers. Often, residents are less accessible than tourists for scholars. Mostly, the traveler's home country is the base of researchers instead of the host destination. Further, linguistic, cultural, or economic challenges make participating in studies harder for locals. Another aspect is the awareness of volunteer tourism and volunteer activities within the community. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 124) Lee further supports the difficulties with identifying residents' awareness of the concept. He expresses the view that the perception of volunteer tourism in host communities can vary. The reason for that is the understanding of the concept of volunteering in a host community and culture. Systems like the political systems influence the specific value and meaning cultures have regarding volunteering, which differs from culture to culture. (Lee, 2020, p. 2) Local communities often do not perceive volunteer tourists the same way as other types of tourists (McGehee & Andereck, 2009, p. 41). Additionally, there is a correlation between residents' knowledge of volunteer tourism and their opinion regarding it. Residents that have a higher understanding of the concept of volunteer tourism are more likely to support it. Those who have an unclear idea about the concept and are unsure about tourists' motivations tend to be more neutral or unsupportive of the implementation. (Lee, 2020, p. 10) The community's culture, history, and personal experiences with volunteer tourism influence the understanding of the concept (Lee, 2020, p. 11).

A study of residents in Mongolia by Lee (2020) was able to identify the opinion of volunteer tourists within the community. The results give insights into locals' opinions, which are used as an example for this paper. Historical incidents influencing older generations' perspectives are one outcome of the study. In Mongolia, for instance, the previous control of the Soviet Union is an example

of such influence. Throughout the country's history, the older generation, in this study defined as 34 years old and older, characterizes volunteer tourism with unpaid workers. They have a restricted comprehension to no understanding of the general concept of volunteer tourism and its altruistic characteristics. Participants in a younger age group, under 34 years old, had a greater awareness of volunteer tourism. The study shows that about 90 percent of younger participants related to the idea of the concept. Additionally, they were able to identify its characteristics such as altruistic motives and its beneficial elements for the host community. The differences between the two groups are argued to stem from outside influences on younger people through social media and school. (Lee, 2020, pp. 5–6) An additional study found that attitudes among residents correlate to the level of education that influences individuals. Individuals with a higher level of education are more likely to be aware of the impact of volunteer tourism within the community. They comprehend more of the negative influences than individuals with a lower education level. (McGehee & Andereck, 2009, p. 45)

There has been limited research on transformative travel in local communities. This is due to the fact that the appeal of a destination and its community is not physical. The appeal is in the characteristics that travelers associate with it. Literature argues that local cultures might influence a destination's attractiveness. However, personal values determine individual travel choices, not necessarily host communities. (Chhabra, 2021, p. 4)

2.1.1 Positive Influences on Local Communities

Even though not much research has been conducted within local communities, literature mentions the positive influences of volunteer tourism on local communities, which include several aspects of the communities' life. Volunteer tourism projects often involve environmental and humanitarian goals which focus on helping host communities. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 121) For

instance, volunteer tourism projects contribute to cultural restoration, educational support, and ecological as well as economic conservation. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 122) According to research, communities benefit most on an ecological basis, followed by social advantages. When compared to other forms of tourism, the concept of volunteer tourism has a more positive economic influence. The reason is that revenues from volunteer activities are directly allocated to the host community. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 2) Additionally, volunteer tourism influences and benefits host communities by providing chances for employment. Those job opportunities may increase salaries. (Lee, 2020, pp. 7–8) Further, volunteer tourism supports local economic development. For instance, volunteer activities bring volunteer tourists to the destination, which stimulates tourism growth there. A research study conducted by Hernandez-Maskivker et al. (2007) in Nicaragua, further highlights the positive influences of volunteer tourism activities on local communities. Volunteer tourism, similar to other tourism forms, generates income through foreign exchanges, maximizes revenues and raises awareness of local issues. Also, the study confirms that employment opportunities are created. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 2)

Lee's study (2020) in Mongolia demonstrates that the tourism sector requires development, and volunteer tourists can contribute to the needed support. Participants of the study stated that they expect an increase in local tourism through volunteer tourism activities, which can also benefit other economic sectors. (Lee, 2020, pp. 7–8) The expected results of increased volunteer projects are improved living conditions, reduced exploitation of people and resources, and revised cultural and ecological sustainability. (Lee, 2020, p. 3) Environmental benefits of volunteer tourism projects are less recorded in literature (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 2). However, the concept of transformative travel can have a positive influence on the local community and their

environment, not just on tourists. For instance, in national parks, tourists appreciate the park more when it offers transformative experiences. That leads to an increase in visitor numbers and repeat visits. (Wolf et al., 2017, p. 7)

Within literature, it is discussed that volunteer tourism can be strategically used to advance the destination that offers volunteer tourism experiences. As mentioned, a higher understanding of volunteer tourism as a concept leads to greater acceptance by locals of such projects. Volunteer tourism increases the involvement and engagement between local communities and tourists. By strengthening the interaction of the two groups, resources can be mobilized. Additionally, it provides the chance for cultural awareness and the exchange of views, which leads to a greater awareness of issues within host communities. By highlighting local issues, a possibility for change is created. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 2) The focus on community issues might be expressed, for example, through global awareness of certain situations and by encouraging change socially (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 5). Through volunteer tourism projects an intense interaction is established between local residents and tourists. The closeness makes the approval of local communities towards volunteer tourism development instrumental. (Lee, 2020, p. 12)

By engaging with volunteer tourists, local communities are establishing beneficial relationships together with travelers. While tourists are gaining new experiences, residents are able to actively participate in projects. At the same time, they are able to endorse their culture among travelers. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 5) Furthermore, interactions between host communities and volunteer tourists can contribute to open communication between the two groups. Through established communication, it is possible for the local community to develop further by learning from other cultures. Through engagement with otherness, communities might transform. For example, the study by Lee (2020) showcased that Mongolians are willing to learn from other cultures to gain a competitive sense in a world influenced by globalization. An

overall progress can be made, as well as interchanging ideas and skills, for which volunteer tourism provides the necessary space. Residents become more open-minded through volunteer tourism activities within their communities. Additionally, in other literature, it is implied that volunteer tourism offers benefits to local communities by building human capital and aiding the development of their skills. (Lee, 2020, p. 7)

Authenticity is an important part of volunteer tourism and its experiences. Volunteer tourists expect authenticity because they want to create a link with the local community in which they are volunteering. They desire to participate in local culture and life while also adding value through their acts. They seek a high level of authentic encounters and experiences. (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 885) Host communities are not obligated to cater to the demands of tourists and modify their cultural practices, as is often the case in mass tourism, for instance. They have the opportunity to be genuine. Further, by providing authentic experiences, the relationship between tourists and locals has the potential to be more intimate and intense. A closer relationship and more profound communication can result in a positive attitude change on both sides. For instance, stereotypes and prejudices can be dissolved. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 14)

An authentic and close interaction between both parties has a further positive influence on local communities. By sharing their everyday experiences, residents can showcase their struggles and challenges to tourists. Participants of the study by Lee (2020) have expressed that this approach might be beneficial and lessen some social problems within the community. Further, through the exchange of experiences, volunteer tourists are believed to gain a better understanding of local issues. By having an enhanced insight into the challenges, volunteer tourists are able to support host communities more efficiently. An example is residents in Mongolia who need support, but the government cannot aid them as required. Here volunteer tourists are able to stand up and assist. (Lee, 2020, pp. 6–7) Additionally, communal pride is improved and within

an international context, stereotypes can be overcome (Köchling et al., 2023, p. 39).

Generally, tourists who have already undergone a transformation or are open to it usually are more aware of their impact on others and their travel destination. They tend to be more sensitive with their actions and behavior. They will not only transform themselves but also the host community. (Sheldon, 2020, p. 10) The research concluded that volunteer tourism can transform and develop a community's sense of identity and social values. It is a result of allowing greater personal interactions with others. Especially, social value is established through the interaction of the local community, tourists, and involved intermediaries. By including the local community in policy decision-making and valuing their consultation, the self versus other narrative is broken down, and a level of equal presentation can be reached. The perceived community value is strengthened through it. Additionally, studies found that volunteer tourism experiences can help in regard to positive transformations of communities. For example, residents in the Philippines reported an increase in confidence and persistence when dealing with the government in regard to better waste management and playgrounds. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, pp. 126–127) Further, volunteer tourism projects in a destination strengthen local identities. For instance, educational programs within communities are improved by measures such as new ways of teaching. Through that, the overall quality of life in communities is enhanced. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 5)

To establish a positive long-term influence on local communities, especially through volunteer tourism, certain measures have to be taken. For example, volunteer tourism projects have to consider the needs of residents and economic equity. Additional positive influences can be generated by empowering host communities and granting them autonomy while creating social and economic benefits. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 3)

2.1.2 Negative Influences on Local Communities

While volunteer tourists positively influence local communities, they also affect residents negatively. Tourists, including volunteer tourists, impact the daily life of the host community (McGehee & Andereck, 2009, p. 47).

As mentioned previously, volunteer tourists are perceived differently than other tourists (e.g. mass tourists), which makes it harder for local communities to identify negative influences through tourism activities (McGehee & Andereck, 2009, p. 41). At the same time, research has not examined negative influences on the host community through volunteer tourism throughout. Part of the reason is that residents have a limited understanding of the concept, and conducting that research is rare. Yet, the reviewed literature presents a few negative influences of volunteer tourism. As with positive influences, similarities between volunteer tourism and other forms of tourism have been drawn. Such similarities include the overlooking of the wants and needs of local residents. Taking these into account is critical for empowering local communities long-term. Also, locals' opinions are important for understanding their attitudes regarding tourism and its various forms. By failing to understand and identify what desires residents have, implementing tourism projects of any kind can fail. (Lee, 2020, p. 1) Negative influences, which were mentioned frequently by scholars, were the possibility for exploitation of the host community by other stakeholders and the threat of creating a new form of colonialism (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 122). A type of white saviorism can be fostered through volunteer projects that attract travelers from Europe or North America to developing countries. The idea of white saviorism is described as host communities' dependency on white travelers to "rescue" locals. That deprives them of the ability to help themselves with local issues and reinforces existing stereotypes. (Baumgarten, 2022) Both exploitation and colonialism could lead to an increase in dependency on other tourism stakeholders within the community (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 122). For instance, through volunteer tourism,

the community's dependence on volunteer tourism organizations and the presence of tourists are increasing (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 125).

Dependencies on stakeholders, such as organizations, result in negative effects on communities. A study by Hernandez-Maskivker et al. (2018) demonstrates that residents become accustomed to such dependency. Local communities are accustomed to receiving everything from organizations. That leads to mindset shifts, and responsibilities are no longer seen within communities but within organizations. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 6) Long-term problems develop as a result of communities' reliance on volunteer tourism participants, especially international volunteers. While economic benefits were discussed in the previous subchapter (pp. 11–14), volunteer tourism projects rarely have long-term economic gains for host communities. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the challenges of dependency on outer sources. International travel came to a halt and with that projects were not be carried out, which lead to the absent of humanitarian aid in destinations. (Köchling et al., 2023, p. 39)

Lee's study (2020) in Mongolia reveals further concerns of local communities. Volunteer tourists are free labor for destinations, which narrows the job market for locals. While regions with a strong economy can sustain such situations, destinations with weak economic development are more harmed by free workers. (Lee, 2020, pp. 8–9) Furthermore, a primary focus on the volunteer tourists can undermine the wants and needs of the host community. Also, it might diminish employment opportunities for locals which will further inflict a dependency on volunteers. Due to the dependency on volunteer tourists and such tourism projects, local communities want to cater to the demand. That results in a romanticization and dismissal of severe issues within destinations. Tourists could idealize their actions when in reality they are not actually helping the community. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 3) Magrizos et al. (2021) discussed neo-colonialism and the threat of implementing it as a result of volunteer tourism activities. Often, volunteer tourists come from North America

and Europe to actively volunteer in developing countries. It is criticized that their actions do not benefit local communities and only commodify local issues. By dismissing the issues at hand, efforts for community change are oppressed. (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 879)

Within both concepts, volunteer tourism and transformative travel, the tourists are mainly in focus of stakeholders such as organizations. This kind of focus may result in the commodification of projects to meet the desires of tourists. The commodification of tourism products can cause negative influences on local communities. For instance, communities are now exposed to the exploitation of their natural resources and there is an unclear exchange of value between all stakeholders. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 6) Wearing and McGehee (2013) mention in their research that by maintaining existing practices, such as commodified experiences, within alternative forms of tourism, local communities would remain repressed. According to them, the focus is on the commercialization of the desire to travel, which often leads to exploiting a destination's resources. The exploitation in this case is a tool to increase profits and to satisfy the demand of tourists. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 125) Further, the local community is seen as a product that is sold to tourists rather than an independent stakeholder (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 3). Consequently, the desires of local communities are left out of tourism projects, such as volunteer tourism activities (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 125). Magrizos et al. (2021) further argue that volunteer tourism and its commodification cater to tourists' views of local communities. Economic inequality and poverty are portrayed as aesthetic experiences, not as serious issues. Local communities are undermined and their efforts for change are pushed aside. (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 879)

In literature, it is also highlighted that a shortcoming of training volunteers has a negative effect on the local community it is supposed to serve. Through improperly trained volunteers, local resources are wasted and not used to their intended maximum capacity. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 6) Further,

the carrying capacity and amount of resources of a community might be over-used. Those negative influences create a complicated relationship between the host community and tourists. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 125) With minimal knowledge or skills, volunteer tourists' contributions to a destination are limited. As a result, what tourists offer and provide is not corresponding to what the local community needs. While undertrained volunteer tourists can lead to problems, it is not certain that trained volunteers can contribute more within a community. Most problems that host communities face are complex and volunteer projects might only help on a superficial level or on depthless issues. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 5) Further, volunteer tourists often visit communities on a short-term basis. These short trips do not allow enough time to handle complex issues and often leave solutions incomplete. Host communities have to readjust to new volunteers. Interactions between residents and tourists are lacking depth, cannot build trust, and fail to bond. (Köchling et al., 2023, p. 41) As a result, the solutions and contributions of volunteers are limited again.

Tourists might have a self-oriented focus and do not concentrate on the local community, which causes a negative influence on those communities in that volunteer tourists engage in (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 881). According to Köchling et al. (2023), volunteer tourism can harm host communities and their workforce, can result in corrupt acts, and tourists may be more concerned with boosting professional applications than being altruistic (Köchling et al., 2023, p. 38). While volunteering, individual behaviors are eventually driven by egoistic and narcissistic motives (Köchling et al., 2023, p. 41). In subchapter 2.2 (pp. 21-24) tourists' motives are discussed further, yet it can be mentioned that curiosity and eagerness to learn are viewed as positive motives. While those are positively influential on tourists, they can act as a limitation for local communities. Learning about others and otherness is not limited to a single community or culture. Through that communities can be viewed as interchange-

able. Further, stereotypical ideas about a community can be reinforced. (Köchling et al., 2023, p. 41) The locals are not seen as a meaningful part of the experience when the interest of tourists is not in genuine interactions with the host community. Yet, that interaction is needed for transformation and gaining new insights. (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 880) The potential of transformative experiences can influence the host community negatively when approached from an anthropological perspective. It is argued that transformative tourism approaches further deepen already existing mindsets and own values are strengthened instead of questioned. (Lean, 2009, pp. 5–6)

Within subchapter 2.1.1 (pp. 11– 15) it was discussed how volunteer tourism activities can improve and strengthen communities' values and identity. However, tourism activities also have a negative influence on local values. A cultural shock can affect not just international visitors but also residents in a destination. Cultural shock is a consequence of differences between languages and difficulties with social contrast. The concept can lead to cultural confusion among residents, estrangement, and feelings of isolation. Furthermore, a close interaction between international tourists and residents highlights community issues and aids in developing solutions. However, it may also lead to destructive comparisons on the side of residents. Especially, local communities which do not have much contact with such tourism experiences might be influenced the most. Mostly, international volunteer tourists are viewed as modern and advanced, while residents are characterized as poor and underdeveloped. That perspective causes locals to compare their own culture with volunteer tourists' cultures and lifestyles. Such comparison results in a loss of cultural identity and behaviors. (Lee, 2020, p. 8) This is supported by further literature, which claims that volunteer tourism might lead to a misunderstanding of the dignity of local communities. By intervening with the local culture of a host community for commercial aspects, the autonomy and sustainability of community development are compromised. Additionally, through being confronted with different cultures, volunteer tourism can cause host communities to di-

minish traditional activities and surrender their own cultural customs. Residents might compare their own cultural practices with others. They may learn other traditional or non-traditional behaviors through such comparison. Locals may be exposed to harmful behaviors such as smoking or diseases that local resources cannot support. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 3)

2.2 Motives and Influences on Tourists

While the influence of volunteer tourism and transformative travel on local communities is under-researched and rarely explored, research often focuses on tourists. Wearing and McGehee (2013) state that one reason for this could be that tourists are more likely to be accessible for research because they are in the same place or country as the researchers. Also, tourists are more likely to participate in research projects. Further, research initiatives on the influences on tourists are more often financed and supported in order to evaluate how consumers react to tourism products. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 124)

Before examining the influences on tourists, it is important to characterize volunteer and transformative tourists. During their travels, everyone has different wants and needs, as well as various motives. Some are looking for wellness and relaxation, while others want adventure. Not all tourists are interested in volunteering or achieving a transformation while traveling. Those who do want to experience the latter, mostly share similar characteristics. A study by Pala and Cetin (2022) shows that transformative travelers are mostly young to middle-aged, well-educated, and mostly travel independently. They conclude that educated travelers might be more open to different experiences and encountering new cultures. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 13) A study by Wolf et al. (2017) was able to identify additional personal characteristics of transformative tourists, lending support to the findings of Pala and Cetins' study. The most common characteristics found, are that individuals wanted to learn. Additionally, they are highly curious, have a willingness to adapt, and are open-minded. The

authors characterize these features as positive traits because they provoke actions and needs, which lead to a transformation within the individual. (Wolf et al., 2017, pp. 17–18)

Besides the mentioned characteristics, the study from Pala and Cetin (2022) concluded that half of their respondents identified travel motivation as an important part of the transformation. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 12) Wolf et al.'s (2017) study supports Pala and Cetin's findings again. They studied transformative tourists and identified various motivations. Common motivations were traveling to escape, experience an adventure, and gain new experiences. Further, differences in motivations between the types of travelers were identified. Wellness tourists, for example, were motivated by stress reduction and health improvement. Volunteer tourists were more likely motivated by desiring enjoyment and adventure. They seek challenges, the possibility to network, and develop on a personal level. (Wolf et al., 2017, pp. 17–18)

The intensity of a tourist's transformation through a new experience varies. Individual backgrounds, norms, and values have an influence on transformation because a person compares their experiences with what they know from their daily life. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 8) Further, various travel motivations have an influence on the degree of transformation of an individual. For instance, the duration of the trip, the type of accommodation, the travel company, and the budget play a factoring role in transformative experiences. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 12) The length of the trip and its influences on transformation are discussed vaguely within additional literature. According to Lee (2009), a longer duration of a trip has a higher possibility to create transformative experiences. The reason for this is that individuals are living through more new experiences compared to shorter durations. Yet, it is not exempt that shorter trips will not result in transformations. (Lean, 2009, pp. 17–18)

While scholars have mostly identified extrinsic factors as contributing to the intensity of the transformation, intrinsic motivation as a determining factor has

not been disclosed often. According to a study cited by Lean (2009), individuals' motivation for transforming cannot be identified as a factor that increases the possibility of a transformation. The study reasons that only individuals who have transformed are examined. People who have not transformed are unable to identify transformative characteristics. Generally, researchers focus on other motivations and advise against categorizing motivations into simple categories such as transformation and learning. The notion is that tourists' motivations change while having the experience, and their perspectives and needs might shift. (Lean, 2009, p. 17)

However, McGehee, Lee and Clemmons (2009) interviewed potential volunteer tourists. The study was also able to identify three groups with different motivational backgrounds: vanguards, pragmatists, and questers. They were able to discover intrinsic motives. The first, vanguards, is a small group. It consists of the youngest demographic who are highly motivated and most interested in improving their skills. For instance, they are characterized by being the most self-interested. The second group, pragmatists, makes up the largest group of tourists within these categories. This group consists of middle-aged tourists. They are mainly motivated by interactions with residents of their host community. A primary focus is on developing proper relationships with their hosts. The group's main motivators are not self-interest or altruism but rather forming human connections. The last group, the questers, is the oldest group. Their motivations are unclear. Yet, they typically act out of altruistic motives. Generally, other research and literature made clear that tourists' motivations are not always influenced by their age. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 123) Researchers further suggests that there are different groups of volunteer tourists based on their motivations rather than their ages: volunteer-minded and vacation-minded tourists. The former shows a more self-motivated approach to their travel. They place more emphasis on the volunteering component of the trip and spend more time volunteering at the destination (Han et al., 2020,

p. 3). Their motives are focused on cultural exchange, self-fulfillment, and improving on a personal level (Lee, 2020, pp. 2–3). The latter pays less attention to the trip's volunteering component and is more focused on its vacation element (Han et al., 2020, p. 3). The focus of vacation-minded volunteer tourists is on the leisure aspects of the trip (Lee, 2020, pp. 2–3).

In general, volunteer tourists seek experiences that are different from other forms of tourism, such as mass tourism, through qualities like altruistic activities (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 122). Research in that area identified various positive motives for volunteer tourists. Motives include altruism, participation in community development, contributing to a better cultural understanding, and developing oneself. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 122) According to recent studies, self-interested values are influential on individuals' altruistic decisions and are progressively gaining importance for volunteer tourists (Han et al., 2020, p. 2). Other scholars agree, identifying altruism as one motivator for volunteer tourists (Wolf et al., 2017, p. 18).

2.2.1 Positive Influences on Tourists

Volunteer tourism allows travelers to gain new experiences, for instance, through educational or cross-cultural occurrences. Every new experience influences and eventually benefits travelers. Tourists gain new knowledge and skills. Volunteer tourism projects can encourage individuals to become more involved with social and environmental issues. As a result, long-term influences are possible. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 2) Volunteer tourism has been identified as a concept that can contribute to a person's development and cultural knowledge (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 879). As mentioned previously, the link between volunteer tourism and transformative travel has not been researched throughout. There has been little research on the general personal transformation of volunteer tourists during or after their trip. However,

a few studies showcase that tourism experiences can have a transformative effect on individuals. (Lean, 2009, pp. 4–5)

Sheldon (2020) suggests feelings of achievement and reassurance through experiences help the inner transformation. By creating memorable experiences, long-term influences on tourists can be achieved. (Sheldon, 2020, p. 9) Volunteering allows a person to gain a better understanding of the world, new perspectives, and an appreciation for what they have. Further, volunteering can influence the character development of an individual. For example, volunteer tourists might gain confidence by improving their skills and broadening their knowledge by engaging with others and helping them. (Han et al., 2020, p. 1) It is possible to include Van Gennep's "rites of passage" framework (see: subchapter 1.2, p. 7). The second passage focuses on gaining a new identity. That is achieved by learning new skills and gaining knowledge. Other literature and research support such conclusions. Through volunteer trips, individuals are able to develop and improve sociocultural relationships. Aside from social benefits, volunteer tourists also gain economic advantages through networking and professional development. It was often reported that volunteer tourists gain independence, new skills (personal and professional), and gratitude for the environment. (Wolf et al., 2017, p. 20)

Volunteer tourists were able to transform by engaging with local communities and interacting with them. Volunteering exposes travelers to greater and deeper interaction with the host community (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 123) Lean (2009) suggest four conditions that must be met for a positive influence and change of individuals when they engage with others. Firstly, both groups have to meet on the same level. Secondly, they have to work together towards a common goal. Thirdly, the contact between tourists and residents should be intimate and lastly, the social climate supports those interactions. (Lean, 2009, p. 5) The four conditions are generally fulfilled by volunteer tourism projects. It is possible to trigger long-term influences on tourists by developing intimate relationships. Engagement with others builds appreciation

for the otherness (e.g. of culture and lifestyle) and reflection of new knowledge has transformative characteristics. (Sheldon, 2020, p. 5) As mentioned, volunteer tourists desire authenticity (see: subchapter 2.1, p. 14). Literature argues that social interaction and having authentic encounters with people are essential to improving and transforming oneself. By experiencing real authenticity, volunteer tourists are able to reflect on and understand their own identity before the experience. Further, they are able to question their beliefs and values through being confronted by authenticity as well as transform after the experience ends. (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 885) Authenticity offers the possibility to undergo the suggestive phase of Van Gennep's "rites of passage" (see: subchapter 1.2, p. 7). Moreover, Wolf et al.'s (2017) second dimension of transformative travel is included (see: subchapter 1.2, pp. 5–6). By questioning their beliefs, individuals self-reflect on their behavior go further in their transformation.

Literature concludes that an intense transformation can occur through direct interaction with others and variation in the environment, e.g. culture and nature. The intensity of a transformation is also influenced by other factors as those mentioned previously. These factors include the attributes of the destination, the motivation of the tourists, the forms of experiences, the duration of the trip, and the tourists' physical and cultural distance from their own community. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 7) The dimensions of transformative travel proposed by Wolf et al. (2017) (see: subchapter 1.2, pp. 5–6), based on Mezirow's theory of transformational learning, are rooted in a disorienting dilemma that confronts individuals with new and intense situations. Those experiences create an internal conflict in a person, which leads to reflective behavior.

According to Magrizos et al. (2021), volunteer tourism can help with self-actualization. It achieves this by exposing the tourist to difficult situations and encounters with a different culture. There are unknown social conceptions and structures within the new community which challenge the tourist. Individuals might encounter homesickness, language barriers, and health difficulties

through consuming a new cuisine. (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 881) Tourists who travel further out of their comfort zone and within host communities that have greater differences in regards to cultural, economic, and social aspects are more likely to experience transformation (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 12). Participants in Lean's study (2009) defined being away from a familiar environment as one trigger for transformation. Within the same study, Lean concluded a tendency that shows that greater distance between familiar and new settings causes more intense transformations. (Lean, 2009, p. 15) By adjusting to a new and different culture, transformation can be triggered. Found again are Wolf et al.'s (2017) dimensions of transformative travel (see: subchapter 1.2, pp. 5–6). Phases three and four, implementing and adapting to new changes, are occurring.

The start of a transformative process is also known as a cultural shock, or as a disorienting dilemma (Wolf et al., 2017, p. 10). Contact with other cultures and cultural groups can result in a change of perspective. For instance, existing stereotypes and biases can be evolved. (Lean, 2009, p. 16) The more a tourist interacts with residents, cultural practices, and the nature of the host destination, the more likely an individual will change (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 13). Wolf et al. (2017) analyze contact with new cultures and transforming characteristics. Looking at international volunteer tourism experiences and their influence on individuals after the trip, the authors conclude that acculturation occurs. Acculturation is viewed as the shift from one perspective to another after engaging in intercultural interactions. Regarding that aspect, volunteer tourism aided the individuals' transformation such as personal growth. (Wolf et al., 2017, p. 23) Van Gennep's framework „rites of passage" (see: subchapter 1.2, p. 7) can be connected. The second phase, the transition rites, focuses on developing a new identity. The new identity can be achieved through engagement with others.

Volunteer tourism experiences can cause long-term transformation in an individual. For example, volunteer tourists might maintain their volunteering acti-

vity by engaging in projects in their home country. Moreover, they might support volunteering organizations and destinations. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 5) In subchapter 1.2 the dimensions of transformative travel by Wolf et al. (2017) were presented (see: pp. 5–6). Within the third dimension, resolution by exploring new actions, transformations are implemented, which influences future actions of individuals. Various factors can lead to a more intense transformation after a trip has ended. For example, activities that enable in-depth discussions and opportunities for drawing insights from previous experiences even after returning home. (Lean, 2009, p. 22) Previous research indicates that volunteer tourists changed their behavior after returning home, due to the network they created during their stay and the change in consciousness they experienced. For instance, volunteers changed their purchasing habits, got involved in social movements, or their relationships with others changed. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 126) Wolf et al. (2017) mention the importance of social contacts in transformative experiences. The third dimension of the transformative travel concept, it is mentioned that contact help with imple-menting changes. (See: subchapter 1.2, pp. 5–6) Other effects on individuals' behavior and actions following a trip include elevated leadership skills, increased awareness of cultural understanding, and a greater social responsibility (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 880). Wolf et al.'s (2017) mention self-reflection as a significant factor for transforming in their dimensions of transformative travel, which helps in reaching the desire to change (see: subchapter 1.2, pp. 5–6). According to a study, reflection is important in transformative experiences. When asked, study participants often identified activities that allowed for in-depth reflection for transformation. For example, methods such as journaling and conversation with others helped to start a transformative process. (Lean, 2009, pp. 18–19) Such activities create opportunities to self-reflect, explore and connect new insights away from daily life. By breaking away from daily routines, tourists are able to stimulate the transformational process. (Sheldon, 2020, p. 7)

Later research concluded that volunteer tourism experiences positively influenced participants. Researchers conducted the study on college students, and findings revealed that after ending the trip, the individuals became more open, civil, and gained wisdom. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 126) A similar study found that these experiences amplify self-development. That outcome is also supported by a study on Israeli backpackers and their self-development. The participants state a positive personality change through their experiences. They described becoming more open, tolerant, and patient. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 9)

2.2.2 Negative Influences on Tourists

When an individual undergoes a transformation as a result of their travels, such as volunteering, it has a mostly positive influence, as discussed in subchapter 2.2.1 (pp. 24–29). However, it also has negative as well as no influences. Some changes merely have a temporary influence on people's inner reflection and do not result in permanent transformations (Sheldon, 2020, p. 4). While transformative travel has the potential to influence an individual's behavior over time, it is rarely discussed in most studies. According to Wolf et al., cultural and volunteering travels rarely ended in long-term transformations, even though these activities are typically linked with transformative outcomes. (Wolf et al., 2017, p. 32) Within literature and research, it was rarely reported that activities such as volunteering result in an individual's behavioral transformation. It is mentioned that even if a strong internal transformation occurs, it may not result in a measurable or noticeable change in an individual's behavior (Wolf et al., 2017, p. 21). Additionally, tourists with a similar cultural background to the host community may have a less transformative experience. That can be a result of fewer differences compared to their daily life. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 12) According to Wolf et al.'s (2017) transformative travel dimension, disorienting dilemma, new and challenging experiences will initiate an individual's transformational process (see: subchapter 1.2, pp. 5–6). When

confronted with similar environments, it does not necessarily occur. Van Gennep's theoretical approach of "rites of passage" (see: subchapter 1.2, p. 7), however, can still be implemented. The first passage concentrates the individual's detachment from their current position, which allows for transformations. The extent of detachment is not specified, and with that, similar environments are able to transform.

Travelers who seek to transform themselves can take part in volunteer tourism experiences. At the same time, volunteer tourists can be part of transformative travel experiences. However, transformation does not occur among all volunteer tourists, and those who do transform have different experiences. Digital tools like social media may contribute to people not experiencing transformative experiences. Through digital tools, tourists are able to stay in contact with their so-called "pre-trip environment". Contact and interactions with the pre-trip environment lead to a decreased separation. Such separation from the familiar is identified as a characteristic of transformative travel. (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 884) Van Genneps' first rite, separation, of his "rites of passage" concept (see: subchapter 1.2, p. 7) is not realized. Volunteer tourists do not fully participate in the following passages since they do not completely detach themselves.

Not many factors are discussed as to why not every volunteer tourist will undergo a transformation. One research studied volunteer tourists in South Africa. While some tourists went experienced personal transformations when their beliefs were challenged, others rejected opinions that did not align with their own. Those who rejected other ideas did not undergo a transformation. According to the same study, the link between volunteer tourism and transformation cannot be considered universal and must be placed in a specific context and process. (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 884)

A traveler's experience might result in personal or social conflicts, or both, within the individual and their surrounding environment. Further, it can create

tension for the individual. For instance, a person may become more aware of the gap that exists between what is deemed right and wrong. Another example is when a person develops a deeper motivation to move abroad. It might cause conflicts with family and friends. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, p. 16) Additional literature supports the difficulty of returning home after a volunteer tourism experience. The third phase of Van Gennep's "rites of passages" is incorporation. After gaining a new identity, an individual is reintegrated back into their home community during this phase. (See: subchapter 1.2, p. 7) Such reintegration can cause problems. The term "deculturation" is used in literature to describe a tourist who is in between cultural settings. The cultural settings consist of the culture of the host community and the culture of the home community. Deculturation can be triggered through volunteer tourism experiences. Experiences encourage the unlearning of old habits and the adaptation of new ones. According to a study group from various volunteer tourism organizations in the United States of America, volunteer tourists experienced difficulties after returning from their trip. There were reports of struggles readjusting to their daily life. For instance, study participants reported feeling isolated at times when they were not in contact with others who had also volunteered. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 126) The re-adjustment after coming home from a trip is also known as a "reverse cultural shock" (Lean, 2009, pp. 21–22). Implementing internal transformation after returning is significant for long-term transformation. Yet, that process can be demanding when individuals are simultaneously dealing with work stress and other responsibilities. (Sheldon, 2020, p. 9)

3 Influences of Sustainable Practices and Organizations

Every type of tourism experience and product involves at least three stake-holders: tourists, destinations, and organizations. The first two stakeholders were covered in the previous chapter (pp. 9–31). The remaining stakeholder, organizations, will be discussed in this part. The focus is on how organizations can influence the outcome of a trip and how tourism products can be designed in a sustainable manner. Additionally, the role of sustainability and its significance will be discussed.

Over time, the number and size of tourism organizations increased. Initially, most organizations concentrated on environmental issues and solutions. Environmental concerns are still important to organizations today. Nevertheless, social and economic challenges are becoming increasingly recognized. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 123) Organizations are an essential component of volunteer tourism experiences. Tour operators and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) design and provide the travel experience. Organizations can be located at the home base of a traveler or at the destination that will be visited. They offer volunteer tourism projects, which provide opportunities to help within a community. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 124)

Sustainable development is defined as achieving a balance between environmental, economic, and sociocultural aspects of tourism development. The World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainable development as "*(…) a process to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*" (Köchling et al., 2023, p. 40). To achieve that goal in tourism, all stakeholders must be willing and gain awareness of sustainable practices. While all forms of tourism have to shift to more sustainable practices, alternative tourism can help guide the way. Alternative types of tourism create meaningful, community-based,

and engaging experiences that promote awareness of local issues. Within volunteer tourism, individuals participate in improving local communities in ecological, social, and cultural aspects. Volunteering raises awareness and supports sustainable practices. (Köchling et al., 2023, p. 40)

While the roles of the three key stakeholders are clear, they all have an influence on sustainable practices within transformative travel and volunteer tourism. The tourism industry progressively focuses on sustainability and implementing sustainable practices into various tourism products and services. The change in focus is due to tourism's influence on the environment, economy, and society. Such influences include the fact that travel contributes to climate change, relying on neo-liberal systems, overtourism, and overconsumption. Changes toward a more sustainable consciousness are also occurring outside of the tourism industry. Individuals' mindsets become more conscious as a result, changing the travel demand. (Sheldon, 2020, p. 1) Literature frequently combines transformative travel and sustainable tourism approaches. When the concept of sustainable tourism was first introduced in the 1980s, it aimed to offer more conscious, attentive, and transforming travel experiences. Yet, in the beginning, the concept was rarely researched. (Wolf et al., 2017, p. 5)

When implementing transformative travel experiences in a destination, the perception of such experiences by an organization is essential. Understanding their perspective allows for the development of strategies that balance the needs and wants of tourists and local communities. (Soulard et al., 2019, pp. 91–92) Further, it is argued that volunteer tourism organizations can act as an intermediate between volunteer tourists and local communities. Through that the organizations can change the opinion, stereotypes, and eventual neo-colonial thinking of both sides. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 124) To design successful transformative travel experiences, local communities, and international tourists have to be focused on equally (Sheldon, 2020, p. 4). Soulard et

al. (2019) indicate the so-called "glocalization framework" as one method. Glocalization aims to reduce the gap between global and local, improve local economies, and empower communities. That is achieved by connecting international business with practices that are socially and culturally sensitive and responsible. (Soulard et al., 2019, pp. 91–92) Organizations primarily use the framework to adjust their standard products to regional markets. They use two tactics for implementing glocalization. The integration of organizational practices is part of the first tactic. In order to gain support, these practices are matched up with the context and culture of the community. The second tactic focuses on promoting tourists' constant support. Recognizing tourist demands, acknowledging cultural differences, and designing products that meet tourists' expectations might help to gain support. (Soulard et al., 2019, p. 92)

Organizations should consider three key elements in addition to the two tactics when designing transformational experiences. Firstly, the well-being of host communities has to be integrated. Forming networks or partnerships is one possibility to incorporate the culture and needs of communities while creating products. Interacting with residents allows for their values to be combined with the tourism product. The second element is the importance of employees in tourism products, which transforms individuals. The skills and knowledge of tourism employees shape transformations. They act as a cultural connection between international tourists and local communities. As discussed in the previous chapter (pp. 13–15, 26–27), interaction and engagement are crucial for transformative experiences. The third and last element is the inclusion of physical spaces for transformational experiences. Such places usually include public spaces that allow for communication between tourists and residents. The design of physical spaces can influence transformational encounters. Organizations must understand how such places affect individuals and their interactions. (Sheldon, 2020, p. 4)

Stakeholders, such as NGOs, play an important part in the implementation of transformative travel and volunteer tourism in a community. Organizations are

often the interface between tourists and local communities, which makes them essential for communication, understanding, and interaction. By doing so, they are able to change the perspective toward empathy and reduce prejudice and neo-colonial views. (Lee, 2020, p. 12) Organizational managers have a direct or indirect influence on the development of volunteer tourism while implementing projects. They have the ability to how all stakeholders interact with one another. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 2)

Volunteer tourism has the potential to have a significant long-term influence. The success of volunteer tourism is linked to its sustainable attributes for social and environmental issues. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 127) Lee (2020) mentions that volunteer tourism can be a driver of the social sustainable development of a destination. The concept supports the local community to become more resilient, expand their knowledge and build a sense of responsibility. (Lee, 2020, p. 12) For that, all stakeholders have to communicate and collaborate with each other. According to literature, successful volunteer tourism projects must involve the local community. They must be included in project participation and the direction of the project. To successfully implement volunteer tourism projects in local communities, organizations must shift their focus from maximizing profits to social sustainability. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 7) Organizations should assist to strengthen local communities by empowering residents and contributing to raising awareness about local issues (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 8). Profitable volunteer tourism organizations will conduct projects that improve the volunteer tourist experience while also preserving the host community's cultural heritage and values. In doing so, volunteer tourism is able to contribute to the local community in various areas. Volunteer tourism, according to McGehee and Andereck, has the potential to be a part of the sustainable tourism sector by strengthening the economy and money flow directly into the community. (McGehee & Andereck, 2009, p. 42) Additional literature supports the significance of NGOs and other volunteer tourism organizations in providing sustainable benefits. Lee argues

that it is the responsibility of organizations to mediate between tourists and residents. They can do so by communicating the value and significance of volunteer projects to the community, which can result in an improved volunteering infrastructure and understanding. (Lee, 2020, p. 12)

Volunteer tourism can be developed more successfully with the cocreation of stakeholders. By implementing cocreational practices, value is generated for tourists, organizations, and local communities. Such value prioritizes focuses on personal, social, and cultural values over entertainment purposes. Additionally, cocreation can emphasize a destination's unique culture and present it to tourists in a more authentic way. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 8) Interviews conducted by Hernandez-Maskivker et al. (2018) concluded that organizations are willing to pursue long-term sustainable approaches. One interviewee mentioned planning long-term benefits for local communities when implementing products. While many volunteer tourists are working in destinations for a short period of time, organizations have the ability to direct a continuous flow into the destination. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, pp. 6-7) It is also argued that volunteer tourism organizations can be a key factor in increasing good practices within volunteer tourism (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 124). When organizations, such as volunteer tourism organizations, understand what triggers and influences long-term changes in individuals, they may impact such tourism experiences. Organizations keep transformative travel in mind while developing and designing products that cater to its characteristics. For example, tour operators might create more informative and authentic offers. (Pala & Cetin, 2022, pp. 15–16) To produce transformative travel experiences, organizations must adjust their priorities from short-term profitability toward a long-term concern for the well-being of local communities (Sheldon, 2020, p. 8).

While tourism organizations can have a mostly positive influence on the implementation of transformative and volunteer projects, they can cause issues or have a negative influence on participants. Critics state concerns regarding

economically-driven organizations which use profit-maximizing strategies and implementations. (Köchling et al., 2023, p. 49) Profits have the potential to motivate organizations. Even well-intentioned efforts when implementing projects can be undermined by the demand of tourists. Organizations' emphasis on profits may become more apparent. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 124) Due to the success of volunteer tourism projects, the market has increasingly shifted away from a non-profit towards a more commercialized approach. Some authors discuss the commodification process within volunteer tourism. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p. 123) Such profit-making-oriented organizations change the volunteer tourism industry. Since their focus is on profit, organizations are generally less established in local communities. Volunteer tourists are their primary focus, while communities are secondary. (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, pp. 123–124) A flow of volunteer tourists ensures a flow of funds into organizations and communities. As a result, sustainable developments and solutions can be questioned. By solving issues in local communities, the basis of volunteer projects breaks away. Further, volunteer tourism products are commodified to increase sales. More intimate aspects of life are commodified and capitalized in volunteer tourism. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018, p. 7) Other authors have also criticized commodification. Köchling et al. (2023) state that volunteer tourism can challenge social sustainability within local communities. They argue that volunteer tourism has become a form of mass tourism by promoting "touristification" and commodification. The needs of local communities are overlooked to fulfill the desires of volunteers. (Köchling et al., 2023, p. 41)

Firstly, organizations are dismissing local communities. During an interview with Hernandez-Maskivker et al. (2018), organizations claimed to establish independence for local communities by entrusting projects to them. Yet, they failed to discuss issues with power dynamics when implementing cocreation. There is a risk that the process will be structured to amplify dependencies on organizations and disempower residents. (Hernandez-Maskivker et al., 2018,

p. 7) Secondly, organizations potentially encourage neo-colonialism and increase the host community's dependency on volunteer tourists (Magrizos et al., 2021, p. 879). The sustainable contribution of tourists to a destination is also criticized by scholars. As mentioned previously, volunteer tourists' motives do not always align with sustainable goals.

4 Conclusion and Prospects

According to the review of literature, researchers primarily examine and collect data on influences on tourists, including volunteer and transformative tourists. Especially, positive influences and outcomes from such travels on individuals are recorded. Local communities and their influences, on the contrary, are rarely studied for both concepts. Yet, there is a growing concern in research regarding the influences on host communities. Further, volunteer tourism and transformative travel are changing toward more sustainable approaches and strategies.

The purpose of this paper was to provide an answer to the research question of how volunteer tourism projects influence both local communities and travelers to change, both positively and negatively. Also, it was demonstrated how both concepts can be implemented in local communities in a sustainable manner. To answer the research question, three hypotheses were developed.

Hypothesis 1: "Volunteer tourism projects trigger transformations."

The concept of volunteer tourism is able to trigger transformations in individuals and communities. Transformative tourists seek to give back, and volunteer projects offer the possibility. Pala and Cetin (2022) defined three types of transformations: behavioral transformations, attitudinal shifts, and changes in a person's personality (see: subchapter 1.2, pp. 4-5). The paper shows that volunteer tourism often includes the first two types of transformation. Volunteering involves confrontation with several issues, which leads to behavioral changes. Also, individuals' attitudes towards various problems shift. However, the third type of transformation is also mentioned in literature. It revolves more around long-term influences. Volunteering creates the setting for transformative ex-periences. When volunteering in different destinations, individuals are pushed out of their comfort zone, interact closely with others, and learn about a new culture. The theoretical approach of Van Gennep's "rites of passage" is confirmed. Volunteer tourists are detached from their known identities. They

will reintegrate their new identity, which was gained as a result of new experiences, with their old one. The literature review validated the hypothesis, demonstrating that volunteer tourism activities can have a significant influence on the transformative changes of tourists. Volunteer tourists change their behavior and attitudes. For instance, individuals may begin volunteering in their home community or become more open-minded to other viewpoints. Additionally, Wolf et al.'s (2017) dimensions of transformative travel are supported by the fact that volunteer projects challenge individuals with new situations, provide opportunities for self-reflection and the implementation of changes. However, volunteer tourism trips are often short-term. Such short trips might not result in a transformation since fewer new experiences are offered. Nevertheless, a transformation is not completely excluded. The literature review revealed that the majority of volunteer tourism projects have transformative influences. At the same time, such projects are also able to trigger changes within host communities. International tourists provide residents with new perspectives and actions. Further, their perception of their own value is strengthened. This hypothesis has been proven.

Hypothesis 2: "Transformative travel and volunteer tourism have positive and negative influences on the involved stakeholders[4]."

Both concepts have a positive influence on stakeholders. Volunteer tourism experiences enable tourists to gain awareness of local issues affecting host communities. Long-term transformed tourists will implement newly learned knowledge and behaviors in their daily lives. They are also able to contribute to their own community and environment when they return. Additionally, volunteer tourism activities benefit local communities. Many influences have short-term effects and benefits. Yet, long-term effects are provided as well. Communities can further implement cultural traditions and raise their sense of

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[4] Only including local communities and tourists.

worth. In particular, communities with more constrained residents become more empowered. The individuals that they host in their community transform them. Local communities are more confident in addressing local issues. At the same time, volunteer tourism provides an opportunity to find solutions to those issues. However, the reviewed literature shows that volunteer tourists are able to have negative influences on local communities. Negative influences include, for example, the risk of newly created colonialism and a weakened communal spirit. Most volunteer tourism trips are short-term and only partially address local issues. Furthermore, the outcome of volunteer tourism projects for tourists may be short-term. While they gained new memories, the trip will either result in no behavioral changes or changes that create conflicts. This hypothesis has been proven.

The type of traveler affects the type of influence on local communities. This paper discussed different travel motivations and characteristics (duration of the trip, relaxation versus adventure, and so on). Volunteer-minded tourists have a stronger positive influence on host communities during volunteer tourism projects. They focus on volunteering during their travels and usually spend more time at a destination. Additionally, those tourists tend to be more altruistic in their acts. (Han et al., 2020)

Hypothesis 3: "Transformative travel and volunteer tourism are sustainable practices."

Scholars view volunteer tourism as an approach to incorporating sustainable practices into all forms of tourism. Volunteer tourism allows for the implementation of sustainable practices through tourism products and practices. Additionally, transformative travel was founded on establishing sustainable products in tourism. While researchers and academics focused mostly on the influences of tourists, the review discovered that local communities are also be-

coming more prominent. The reason for that is, among other reasons, the sustainability shifts and practices in the tourism industry. Focusing on establishing sustainable tourism products will benefit host communities as well as tourists. Volunteer tourism can be viewed as a sustainable and popular approach to traveling. It pays attention to those who are in need. Glocalization and cocreating offer the opportunity for sustainable practices in destinations. The concepts function within the bounds of economic, ecological, and social sustainability and open up new tourism opportunities. Sustainable practices and concepts developed during tourism projects are even carried out beyond the tourism industry. Individuals, either tourists or residents, are given the chance to implement sustainable behavior in their everyday lives. However, there are issues with how the concepts are implemented. Organizations that prioritize profits over sustainable practices limit their long-term potential. Further, organizations might aid in increasing dependence on tourism projects. This hypothesis has been partially proven.

There are various theoretical approaches to both concepts, as well as their influences and significance. Yet, the literature review concluded that many scholars reach similar findings and conclusions. There were no deviating opinions and findings. Generally, travel influences individuals and has effects on host communities. Most travel experiences and memories ingrain in people and provoke reflection. However, a few scholars were more critical of their studies and showcased the problematics of the concepts. The theoretical approach to transformative travel and volunteer tourism is primarily based on the benefits of travel on and for tourists. While including local communities and residents in the presented frameworks is possible, the concepts do not focus solely on them. Moreover, the concepts could be applied to individual residents rather than to the community as a whole. Future scholars should base and develop their theoretical framework on transformed host communities through tourism and volunteer projects. The focus should deviate from communities as

a tool for transformation and volunteer projects. Local communities should be viewed as equally significant stakeholders in projects, with equal recognition.

In the future, sustainable approaches and implementations of solutions should be studied more to understand how sustainable conscious methods influence tourists and local communities. Due to both concepts promoting sustainable practices in tourism, how they interact with one another should be explored further in the future. Local community research and study should be prioritized because their approval of tourist activities is critical. The local community's well-being must be maintained while generating profit and catering to an increasing demand for such travel. While demand cannot be controlled, it is the responsibility of an organization to implement projects in a sustainable manner. It is critical to consider local perspectives and planning initiatives. To achieve long-term tourism growth within destinations, organizations should incorporate local tourism stakeholders.

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Eidesstattliche Erklärung

Hiermit versichere ich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit bisher bei keiner anderen Prüfungsbehörde eingereicht, sie selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt sowie Zitate kenntlich gemacht habe.

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Anzahl der Zeichen: 78732

Anzahl der Wörter: 13229