



New spaces of development partnership: Rethinking international volunteering

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Abstract: The concept of partnership is frequently invoked in international development as discourse and policy prescription to better understand relationships and engagements between donors and beneficiaries. Despite the increasing prominence of the *idea* of partnerships, in *reality* mutual, equal and sustainable development partnerships remain limited. This article examines the extent to which recent growth in international development volunteering can provide new spaces where equitable and sustainable partnerships may emerge. This review highlights partnership's legacy in discourses of participation and explores the changing role and impact of development volunteering. We identify three spaces where new kinds of alliances and relationships can be forged – personal learning, policy and geopolitical.

Key words: partnership, development, volunteering, Australia, antipodes

I Introduction

In recent decades, relationships in international development cooperation have been described as ‘partnerships’. The term was originally employed by theorists and practitioners of alternative/populist development in the 1980s to capture the ideal of shared development goals, solidarity and trust in North–South non-governmental organizations (NGO) relationships. It was adopted by mainstream development policy and practice when the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (1996) set out to reconceptualize donor–recipient relationships as in ways that would produce not only a more people-centred, participatory, sustainable development process but also a more effective and efficient aid delivery, and thus, restore the tarnished image of development assistance. Following the OECD’s powerful endorsement, the term became institutionalized in 2000 as the eighth Millennium Development Goal (MDG) – ‘a global partnership’. As with many development concepts that are applied by different actors and for different purposes in multiple contexts, partnership has come under critique (Baaz, 2005; Crewe and Harrison, 1998; Elbers, 2012; Lister, 2000) and even been dismissed by some researchers as having lost its meaning (Hatton and Schroeder, 2007). In this article we re-examine the concept and its use in the context of international development volunteering (IDV), a development sector that has been neglected by researchers, to explore whether and how its progressive connotations can be retained.

IDV has been a part of many bilateral aid programmes since the second half of the 20th century but has until recently been largely overlooked by researchers. Within the often technical process of development it has the potential of offering ‘a far wider view of development as a new, and morally-informed, vision of global responsibility’ (Lewis, 2006: 661). Indeed, IDV is connected to values, such as local accountability, equality, mutual learning and reciprocity

(Devereux, 2008; Georgeou, 2012; McWha, 2011a), all associated with the notion of partnership. At its best, IDV can provide spaces for the exchange of skills and knowledge, awareness building about structural causes of unequal and unsustainable development, and local, people-focused alternatives to the technical and economic bias of mainstream development cooperation. However, international volunteering is embedded in the neoliberal political and economic structures of the development industry (Georgeou and Engel, 2011) and can also be patronizing, self-serving and exploitative.

This article explores the potential of IDV to promote beneficial partnerships through a study of the Australian Volunteers for International Development (AVID). Funded by Australian Aid, this programme sends around 1,000 skilled Australians each year on placements averaging 12 months to work in government agencies and NGOs in developing countries. The article begins with the emergence, and critical review, of the notion of partnerships in development. The subsequent section examines the role of development volunteering and the Australian volunteer programme. The final section introduces the idea of spaces of partnership before investigating in more detail three potential spaces in which partnerships are shaped through IDV: the ‘learning space’ of the volunteers’ relationships with their local counterparts, the ‘policy space’ in which host organizations negotiate placements that suit their own goals and priorities and the ‘geopolitical space’ in which IDV programmes can contribute to cosmopolitan worldviews and public diplomacy. In conclusion we argue that an analysis of the spaces of partnerships enables a better understanding of the impacts of volunteering and a more nuanced perspective on development partnerships.

II Understanding development partnerships

Since the mid-1990s when the OECD proposed ‘the partnership model’ as its most

positive innovation in the new framework for development cooperation (OECD, 1996: 17), there has been a tendency to label all development relationships as types of partnerships. The OECD presented partnerships as vehicles for people-centred, participatory, sustainable development led by Southern partners and facilitated by Northern donors. This section outlines the emergence of discourses of partnerships and identifies their relationship to participatory development before presenting some critiques of these approaches. Although the idea of partnerships was mainstreamed in the 1990s, the concept has a longer history in development policy. It emerges at critical junctures particularly when enthusiasm for development assistance is flagging and established aid hierarchies are called into question. For example, the Pearson Report commissioned by the World Bank in the late 1960s recommended a new model for international cooperation based on ‘an active and a genuine partnership between rich nations and poor’ (Pearson, 1970: 10). A decade later, the Brandt Report reiterated the need for a global partnership for development, emphasizing ‘mutuality of interests’ and interconnected fates (Brandt, 1980: 281).

Key to understanding contemporary discourses of partnership is recognizing its relationship to aspects of participatory development approaches. Impey and Overton (2014) trace core arguments shared by partnership and participation discourses back to Robert Chambers and Amartya Sen, who challenged the idea that people and institutions in the Global South are merely passive recipients of development. Chambers emphasized the value of poor people’s knowledge and their role as development agents (Chambers, 1997), while Sen saw development as expanding people’s freedom to act ‘as citizens who matter and whose voices count’ and who can take responsibility for their own choices (Sen, 1999: 288). Partnership discourses draw on these ideas of agency and self-determination and are ‘in essence, the concrete manifestation

of the participatory turn in development practice’ (Impey and Overton, 2014: 115). However, development institutions often invoked participation and partnership discourses not for reasons of social justice and empowerment but more because of their (neoliberal) preoccupation with development effectiveness. As such, partnerships fulfil the need for Southern participation but in the form of contractual arrangements mandated and controlled by Northern donors. Thus, rather than achieving sustainable mutual benefit, enhanced efficiency and creativity, joint learning and global solidarity, partnerships have become a mechanism for spreading risks and responsibilities (Hatton and Schroeder, 2007; Impey and Overton, 2014).

Criticisms of the idea of partnership are similar to those levelled at participatory approaches. Both highlight the tendency of dominant discourses of development to co-opt potentially radical discourses into the mainstream and in so doing erode the progressive potential (Hickey and Kothari, 2009: 88). For example, civil societies may be invited to participate in ways that make market-led development more sustainable (Murray and Overton, 2011). As Lewis (1998: 505) argues, this creates ‘dependent partnerships’ that are linked to funding and are based on ‘rigid assumptions about comparative advantage’. Furthermore, Craig and Porter (2003: 54) point out that ‘apolitical catchwords such as participation, partnership, and community’ play powerful legitimizing roles in an “inclusive liberalism” in which the disciplined inclusion of the poor and their places is a central task’.

Partnership and participation are also criticized for failing to address unequal power relations. Where participatory development approaches often assume that the poor can be empowered without significant political change, mainstream approaches to partnership side-step questions about politics and power altogether by reducing partnerships to the instrumental purpose of ‘getting things done’ (Elbers, 2012; Hatton and

Schroeder, 2007; Lister, 2000: 229). According to Elbers, even those NGOs that embrace a view of development as an indigenous process aimed at transforming power relations often fail to live up to their own principles when engaging with Southern counterparts because of their adherence to managerialism in which it is assumed that effectiveness and efficiency can be achieved with the adoption of the right management tools. This creates a tension between partnership as a means to an end and partnership as a form of social transformation and, thus, an end in itself (Elbers, 2012: 176).

Despite these criticisms, many development practitioners subscribe to the moral dimension of the partnership discourse while critiquing the paternalism of development aid (Baaz, 2005: 153). They recognize that breaking down old power hierarchies, enabling dialogue and developing trust between development actors requires building 'effective and ethical relationships' (Hinton and Groves, 2004: 9). For Lewis (1998: 506), 'active partnerships' require ongoing negotiation, sharing ideas and skills, and learning by trial and error while Lister (2000) argues that successful partnerships are often based on strong personal relationships that provide the social capital that can bridge power and knowledge gaps between partners and create space for joint problem solving. As we demonstrate in the following sections, IDV can arguably offer such spaces in which these forms of partnerships can emerge.

III International development volunteering (IDV)

International development volunteering usually refers to individuals who spend a period of time abroad in the Global South to promote development broadly aligned with the country's development priorities. IDV began to take shape in the post-World War II era with the rise of the 'development project' (Georgeou and Engel, 2011). For example, the Volunteer Graduate Scheme in Australia

began sending skilled graduates in the early 1950s to assist the newly independent country of Indonesia (Brown, 2011). Other programmes emerged around this time, including Volunteer Service Overseas (VSO) in the United Kingdom in 1958 and the US Peace Corps and the Canadian University Service Overseas (CUSO) in 1961. Most established IDV programmes rely on government foreign aid budgets and are managed by NGOs, multilateral institutions or for-profit organizations (Georgeou and Engel, 2011; Sherraden *et al.*, 2006). Accurate global figures are difficult to obtain but around 2012 some 26,000 volunteers were involved in nine long-term programmes that are largely funded by Northern aid budgets.¹ The enduring presence and high volume of government-supported volunteers indicate that they are assumed to play a significant role in international development. However, with a few notable exceptions there is limited research on IDV and its impacts. That which exists has tended to focus on the growth and diversification of short-term volunteer programmes² in response to the rising demand for international experience among young people from the global North (Jones, 2011; McBride and Sherraden, 2007; Sherraden *et al.*, 2008; Baillie Smith and Laurie, 2011; Tiessen and Heron, 2012), with a few more recent studies investigating long-term volunteering (Devereux, 2010; Georgeou, 2012; Impey, 2011; McWha, 2011b). These studies indicate that IDV's primary contribution to development is building relationships, which can enable volunteers and their local partners to work together towards locally defined development outcomes. How successful they are, however, depends on a number of factors.

Many volunteers are motivated by a desire to make the world fairer and more equal. This aspiration for a 'kinder development' (Roy, 2010: 12) is facilitated by global justice campaigns and reform of aid and trade structures. In this context volunteers perceive themselves as global citizens who are aware of global problems such as poverty and

are 'empowered to act [...] in responsible ways'. Yet implicit in the idea of global citizenship is the notion that it is those of the Global North who are capable and empowered enough to act (Biccum, 2011: 1339). While there is a critical understanding of volunteer's complicity in privileging Northern ways of knowing and in global inequality, it does not prevent them from reinforcing these (Tiessen and Kumar, 2013: 423). In addition, many host communities see international volunteers as wealthy people who possess special skills and powers as well as being racially superior. Thus, the encounter between volunteers and host organizations is 'inevitably racialized' and susceptible to confirming existing aid hierarchies (Perold *et al.*, 2013: 186). More immersive forms of long-term volunteering, however, may provide the space and time for self-reflection between individuals and organizations in the Global South and North.

Despite these problematic elements, the enhancement of international understanding is a key objective of government-funded IDV programmes. For example, the Peace Corps has a legislative mandate not only to contribute to development but also to help promote a better understanding of Americans in other countries and improve Americans' understanding of other peoples (Tarnoff, 2013: 8). Public diplomacy, broadly conceptualized as 'strategic people-to-people communication in the effort to establish a sustaining relationship' (Payne, 2009: 579), aims to further state interests by creating shared meaning and values on which to build political and economic influence, or as Nye (2008: 96) puts it, to get 'others to want the outcomes that you want'. However, volunteers often report life-changing impacts of being immersed in another culture, including gaining a critical perspective on mainstream development practices and the position of one's own country in the world (Frontani and Taylor, 2009). Thus, if volunteers forge close links with their host communities they may be able to achieve a more nuanced understanding of the Global

South and shift public perceptions in their home countries (Georgeou, 2012: 183).

As governments have come under greater pressure to demonstrate the development effectiveness of their aid programmes, IDV programmes have come under closer scrutiny. Paradoxically, the push to assess the impact of IDV through outcomes-based development indicators risks undermining the less tangible relational impacts of volunteering (Lough and Allum, 2013). Furthermore, 'the ability of volunteers to effect change is limited by the ambiguous nature of their role (including vague job descriptions), the limited resources at their disposal, and the lack of organisational support' (Devereux, 2008: 363). Volunteers in the Peace Corps assigned to agricultural programmes in Africa, for example, felt 'ill-qualified to take on the seemingly insurmountable problem of world hunger after only three months of training' (Frontani and Taylor, 2009: 92). On the other hand, the limited power of volunteers and the necessity to adapt to local structures and resources can contribute to a more meaningful and sustainable development model led by locally defined agendas. Thus, as Devereux suggests, volunteering has the potential to contribute to transforming development assistance into a 'radical and reciprocal people-centred relational development process' (Devereux, 2010: 40).

One of the challenges in capturing the impacts of volunteering is that there is limited understanding of the perceptions of host organizations and communities. However, recent research with host organizations in Peru and Kenya found that 'intercultural understanding was seen as a prerequisite to develop'. The study found that the enhancement of effective partnerships at the grassroots level facilitated access to external resources, skills transfer along with social capital and capacity development (Lough and Matthew, 2013: 17). This impact of volunteers is also evident in McWha's (2011a) work in Cambodia, where host organizations reported that they related better to volunteers

than to other foreign development workers. As volunteers worked alongside local staff over a longer period of time, they were able to gradually dismantle the hierarchy and privilege attached to the Northern development expert by communicating more openly, engaging in mutual learning and teaching, and building confidence and trust. Equal partnerships are more likely when host organizations are able to assert their own development agendas and organizational values in IDV programmes rather than being cast, as often happens, in the role of passive recipients of volunteers as a form of aid (Impey and Overton, 2014: 115).

Equitable partnerships are less likely to develop in short-term youth volunteering largely driven by demand for international experience, but there is considerable evidence to show that volunteers benefit substantially from the process. One way in which volunteers benefit is by becoming more capable of communicating across cultures and seeing the connections between local and global issues. This gives volunteers a competitive advantage in an increasingly transnational skilled labour market (Jones, 2011). While short-term volunteers gain benefits, host organizations often have to resource and support young, unprepared volunteers ignorant of local language and culture (Lough *et al.*, 2010). In long-term volunteering, too, IDV placements can be 'rich learning environments' for the acquisition of valuable skills such as enhanced self-sufficiency and self-confidence, the ability to manage complexity and uncertainty, cross-cultural communication and language skills, global awareness and establishing professional networks (Fee and Gray, 2011: 533). As such, IDV programmes can serve as a 'government subsidised apprenticeship scheme' for the development sector (Georgeou and Engel, 2011: 301). Acknowledging the services that host organizations provide in building the skills and capacities of volunteers is an important step in recognizing the potential for partnerships in volunteering.

Australian IDV provides an interesting case for examining spaces of partnership. Although Australian development is infrequently discussed in the mainstream development literature, Australia challenges dominant binary divisions through which the world is commonly understood – North/South, West/East, First World/Third World, developed/underdeveloped, centre/periphery. As a colonial settler society, Australia has cultural roots in Europe and in indigenous Australia; even though it is classified as developed and First World it is also classified as a product of colonial development. Even though geopolitically it belongs to the West, it is located in the geographical South and, hence, now economically more integrated with Asia-Pacific than with any other region (Schech, 2012). The label 'antipodean' invokes this in-between place as Europe's Other, relegated to the periphery as a product of British imperialism, and has been used to imagine Australia as different from the Global North and West in terms of identity, perspective and vision (Beilharz, 1997). Since the 1960s, the antipodean position has inspired various attempts by political leaders to present Australia as a middle power or as a bridge between its northern allies and its southern neighbours (Ungerer, 2007). Australian development workers have been portrayed as more egalitarian and hands-on, 'prepared to hop in and demonstrate while Europeans and Americans stand back and advise' (Whitlam, 1966).

Australian aid has been primarily focused on the Asia-Pacific region, not only because it is where a high proportion of the global poor live but also because of its economic and strategic importance to Australia. Indeed, the new aid paradigm announced by the Australian government links aid directly to 'economic diplomacy' (Bishop, 2014). To cement the integration, or subordination, of Australian development policy with national economic and political interests, the government abolished the Australian Agency for International Development in 2013 and placed Australian Aid under the

control of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), following the example of Canada and New Zealand. However, at the same time as presenting the new paradigm, the government highlighted its connection to Australia's role in the Colombo Plan established in 1949 to strengthen economic and social development in the Asia-Pacific region through human resource development (Brown, 2011: 35). The Colombo Plan did not only bring thousands of Asian students to Australia but also initiated Australian volunteering, with the first volunteer going to Indonesia in 1951 (Brown, 2011: 45). This started the Volunteer Graduate Scheme to Indonesia, which was expanded to other countries and became the Overseas Service Bureau, later renamed Australian Volunteers International (AVI), one of the three agencies currently contracted by the Australian government to manage the AVID programme (Georgeou and Engel, 2011: 299). In the 2012–13 financial year as many as 1,046 AVID volunteers were on overseas assignments, with most of them (85 per cent) placed in the Asia-Pacific region. AVI utilized 21 per cent of these volunteers, Australian Red Cross (ARC) 6 per cent and Scope Global, a for-profit organization, the remaining three-quarters (Office for Development Effectiveness [ODE], 2014).

To explore the potential for volunteering to promote more equitable partnerships, it is important to understand the kinds of spaces in which relationships are created and performed. Since the impact of volunteering is shaped by volunteer–host relationships, wider structures and discourses of development as well as government interests, these spaces include those that are personal, policy related as well as geopolitical.

IV Emerging spaces of partnership in international development volunteering

In the development policy literature, spaces broadly refer to 'the physical and metaphorical opportunities for engagement between

actors' (Wilson, 2006: 512). Any development intervention that involves a variety of actors creates a space where processes and outcomes are to an extent unpredictable. Wilson identifies a 'learning space' where working together on a practical problem can promote joint learning and mutual trust, both pivotal to transformational change. Applied to the context of IDV, Northern volunteers working together with Southern counterparts on a task defined by the host organization can create personal spaces of learning, exchange and trust. The extent to which mainstream development discourses and practices are challenged depends on the willingness to engage in joint knowledge creation and whether the actors are empowered enough to challenge each other (Wilson, 2006: 517). Volunteers are less powerful and less bound by the need to produce predetermined outcomes than other development professionals and often more willing to engage in reciprocal learning. However, political, social, cultural and historical factors may constrain the ability of actors to develop relationships of trust.

The concept of 'policy space' is useful to examine how actors come to participate in IDV and shape the terms under which host organizations participate and volunteer placements are created, promoted and filled. Brock *et al.* (2001: 7) argue that policy spaces can open up possibilities for a shift in policy direction but are inevitably shaped by dynamics of power and knowledge. The possibilities for transforming policy depend on who participates in policy spaces and on what terms and how they are able to interact with the established policy discourses. Being *invited* to participate implies a different power and knowledge dynamic than *demanding* to participate. In the context of volunteering, policy spaces enable us to explore the agency of funding bodies, International Volunteering Coordinating Organisations (IVCOs), host organizations and volunteers, and how they encounter and contest discourses of IDV.

The third kind of space of volunteering relates to the geopolitical space for the possibility of global citizenship. Harvey (2000: 560) states that the production of space is 'as much a political and moral as a physical fact'. Global citizenship should therefore not denote a passive contemplation of interconnectedness or universal values but an active endeavour to understand how spaces are produced at the geopolitical scale and how they can be remade in emancipatory ways. How does volunteering contribute to a critical understanding of the world and to new ways of imaging partnerships between the Global North and South? What kind of global citizenship is fostered through IDV programmes? Equipped with these three applications of the concept of space, we can now explore the potential of IDV to forge new kinds of partnerships, using the example of the Australian AVID programme.

Individuals as partners: The learning spaces of AVID

As discussed earlier, development interventions create a space of engagement in which actors—volunteers and the people with whom they work—can jointly learn. The AVID programme is described as an opportunity for Australians 'to share skills and foster linkages with people and organisations in developing countries' (DFAT, 2014b). Sharing and partnership are frequently used words in the online information material of the three IVCOs contracted by the government to manage the AVID programme. AVI describes its approach as working 'in partnership with a wide range of local partner organisations' to increase their 'ability to deliver services to their communities' (AVI, 2013). The ARC conceives of volunteering as 'sharing skills and expertise with local organisations, so they can drive and achieve their own solutions to development challenges' (ARC, 2013). Scope Global not only highlights the volunteers' capacity-building role but also notes 'skills exchange'. It casts the volunteer in an active role with

a responsibility for ensuring sustainability: 'Each AVID assignment involves training and capacity building aspects so that, at the end of the AVID assignment, the work can continue after the AVID has returned home to Australia' (Scope Global, 2014). However, capacity building and skills sharing are often differently understood in the actual placement, as the recent government-commissioned *Evaluation of the AVID Programme* (ODE, 2014) has found.

Based on surveys conducted specifically for evaluating capacity impact on host organizations, the *Evaluation* found that almost 90 per cent of the surveyed host organizations were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their AVID volunteers and regarded them highly for 'their professionalism, experience, flexibility, adaptability, fresh ideas, approachability and ability to work as part of a team'. However, there was a tension between volunteers' expectation that they would support their host organization's capacity building to increase its sustainability, and host organizations' view of volunteers as an extra pair of hands to enhance their immediate capacity (ODE, 2014: 40–41). Some host organizations distanced themselves from the notion of volunteers as capacity builders, particularly if they were 'being overly directive towards host organization staff'; in contrast, they identified respect for the 'professionalism of their colleagues' as a feature of particularly successful volunteers.

Many of the volunteers surveyed for the *Evaluation* had to revise their expected roles in the first months of their placement. Almost half experienced a mismatch between what they thought they would do and what their host organization actually wanted them to do (ODE, 2014: 51). Mismatches provide opportunities for mutual learning as preconceived ideas about each side are re-examined and appropriate roles identified. The disorientation commonly experienced by volunteers during the early part of their placement is part of the contextual learning experience in

which the terms of partnership are negotiated (Georgeou, 2012: 140). Georgeou's study sheds some light on the power dynamics involved in this negotiation process by exploring volunteers' understanding of 'mutually equitable relationships'. While volunteers expect to enter into equal partnerships with locals, they also expect to be able to control which capacities they will build and which knowledges and skills they will share. When volunteers are asked to step outside of their anticipated capacity-building role, they felt being instrumentalized as a resource, to be tapped and managed by locals (Georgeou, 2012: 158). In terms of 'learning spaces' we can identify three points that require further research. One is the tension between volunteer and local understandings of capacity and the role of each side of the volunteering encounter in the capacity-building process. The second is how these roles are negotiated and the circumstances under which volunteering becomes a mutual learning space where the actors are able to question dominant notions of development and its pursuit. Third, we need to understand better how volunteering builds mutual trust in ways that can enable an equal partnership.

*Organizational partnerships:
The policy spaces of AVID*

International volunteering involves a complex set of relationships between governments, IVCOs, host organizations and volunteers to which the label *partnership* is attached often by default. The Australian government sets the tone by explaining that 'partnerships with a wide range of groups are essential for an effective aid program' and that effectiveness is about maximizing impact and achieving value for money (DFAT, 2014a). DFAT helpfully lists the different types of partners and their function in the Australian Aid architecture (DFAT, 2014d). Volunteers are cast as partners with a role 'to share skills and foster linkages with people and organisations in developing countries' (DFAT, 2014d).

The three IVCOs fit into a partnership role as 'commercial contractors' that bring professional experience to the delivery of aid programmes. Their current five-year contracts can be extended for another two or three years until the end of 2020, and although this is relatively long, the Australian government controls the partnership through performance management. Among other things, this involves stipulating the number of volunteers to be sent to each partner country and the development sector in which they will work. The relevance of their work to the host country's development priorities is assessed by the extent to which volunteer assignments align with DFAT's country strategies (ODE, 2014: 76). The shift to performance-based contracts in the 2000s has arguably depoliticized development volunteering and disengaged it from rights-based, humanitarian and participatory understandings of development that historically underpinned IDV programmes (Georgeou and Engel, 2011: 303).

Before jumping to conclusions, however, it is important to consider the role of host organizations in this policy space and the extent to which they are able to assert their interests and priorities in their relationship with the programme. The *Evaluation* found that capacity building through IDV is more effective in host organizations with long-term strategies and multiple volunteers but that 'most volunteers were essentially "one-off" assignments rather than part of a long-term strategy for the host organisation' (ODE, 2014: 47). Over 80 per cent of host organizations reported being actively involved in designing the volunteer assignments and three-quarters were involved in choosing the volunteer, but many also reported uncertainty about their ability to obtain volunteers in the future (ODE, 2014: 43–44). Running through the *Evaluation* is a conflict between the acknowledgement that long-term IDV partnerships lead to more sustainable outcomes and the fear of encouraging aid dependency

among host organizations. Impey and Overton (2014: 113) find that host organizations can establish effective partnerships with IVCOs 'when the fundamental principles of respect and reciprocity [...] are given real expression'. This involves a 'psychological shift' from needs-based to capability-based relationships whereby the host organization asserts its own capabilities and priorities, assumes full responsibility for managing their volunteers and expects them to actively learn and reflect throughout their assignment (Impey and Overton, 2014: 122–23). More in-depth qualitative research is needed to explore how host organizations in the AVID programme are able to shape volunteering partnerships.

The geopolitics of partnership: Global citizenship and public diplomacy in the AVID programme

As discussed in the second section, international volunteering is strongly associated with building global citizenship, conceptualized in terms of cross-cultural communication skills and awareness of global issues and interconnectedness. Volunteers as global citizens are envisaged by sending governments to fulfil a dual role as ambassadors *for* their country to promote a positive image of Australia overseas and as ambassadors for development *in* their own country to shore up public support for the government's aid programme and other foreign affairs policies. In Australia, IDV's role as a public diplomacy tool was confirmed in 2011 when the government amalgamated several IDV programmes under the name of AVID and branded Australian aid with an unambiguously Australian symbol—the kangaroo. At the launch of AVID the then Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Kevin Rudd, referred to volunteers as 'living ambassadors of Australian compassion' who are working in the field with 'gutsy determination' and a 'very practical attitude of how do we fix this well?' (Rudd, 2011), echoing Geoff Whitlam's characterization decades earlier of Australian development experts as

'not afraid of the oily rag' (Whitlam, 1966: 14), down-to-earth and hands-on. Rudd also employed the *bridge* metaphor in praising volunteers as 'building bridges to the world at a very personal human level – right across the planet, in the good name of Australia' (Rudd, 2011).

There was a strategic purpose attached to spreading the 'good name of Australia' across the planet. AVID volunteers were sent to Africa in greater numbers and spread over more countries than ever before, and Latin America and the Caribbean region received its first AVID volunteers just at the time when the Australian government was lobbying countries to support its bid for a temporary seat on the Security Council for 2013–14. The bid succeeded, and in 2013, a newly elected government decided to phase out the AVID programme and other aid to Latin America and the Caribbean region. As Australia is aligning the Australian aid programme more closely with national interests, soft power objectives may play an even greater role in managing AVID in the coming years. For example, the 2014–15 aid budget saw aid to sub-Saharan Africa cut from the previous year while aid to Cambodia increased. According to the DFAT website, a 'more prosperous Cambodia is not only in Australia's economic interests, but also integral to ensuring trans-boundary issues, such as drug-trafficking and pandemics, are managed effectively' (DFAT, 2014c). Consolidating strong diplomatic ties with continuous flows of aid has helped secure the Cambodian government's agreement in 2014 to accept Australia-bound refugees for permanent settlement despite protests from their own citizens. Whether AVID volunteers support Australia's foreign policy is not clear. Almost all returned volunteers state that their understanding of aid, development issues and other cultures has grown as a result of their volunteer experience (ODE, 2014: 72–73). What kinds of global citizenships their increased understanding promotes and how it

shapes their views of government foreign policy remain to be researched, as does the impact of volunteering on global citizenship in host countries.

V Conclusion

In this review article we have critically examined the development and various debates about the concept of partnership within processes of development. We have traced its links with participation but demonstrate the particular elements of partnership that require closer interrogation. Drawing upon the Australian context of IDV and development, we have explored whether long-term government-funded IDV can create spaces for new and more equitable development partnerships to emerge. Partnerships in practice are often found to be contractual arrangements between unequally positioned development actors, and the discourse of partnership often reinforces rather than challenges global inequalities. However, there is a continuing perceived need to develop relationships that can effectively address poverty and other injustices, and to do so sustainably, and this is reflected in the emerging post-2015 MDG agenda for development. The impact of volunteering is difficult to measure because, more than any other development intervention, it takes place within different development spaces, which we have identified as 'learning', 'policy' and geopolitical spaces, where the outcomes are either uncertain or are not easily visible. The research indicates that volunteering has above all relational impacts and these determine what, if any, concrete development outcomes can be achieved. Southern host organizations recognize the value and benefits of successful learning spaces, but they are increasingly aware of the benefits of volunteering to volunteers, which puts them in a strong position as partners who have something valuable to offer the sending country. This creates a policy space that some use to challenge established notions of volunteering as a one-sided act of

altruism and instead assert the mutuality of volunteering relationships. As the geopolitical landscape is shifting in the 'Asian century', IDV is an interesting space to watch for signs that Australia's and other volunteer sending nations' relationship with the Global South can be transformed into partnerships based on solidarity.

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Notes

1. This figure is based on the most recent reports and evaluations of the following nine programmes: Australian Volunteers for International Development, BMZ Weltwärts, Canadian University Service Overseas International (CUSO), Fredskorpset Norway, Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, World Friends Korea, Peace Corps Volunteers, United Nations Volunteers and VSO International.
2. Short term is variously defined as a time period ranging between 1 and 8 weeks (Sherraden *et al.*, 2006, 166) and up to six months (Tiessen and Kumar, 2013), suggesting some overlap in the definitions of long- and short-term volunteering in the literature.

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