

Volunteer Tourism as Profit Frontier:  
The Case of Fathom Cruises in The Dominican Republic

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## **Abstract**

### **Volunteer Tourism as Profit Frontier: The Case of Fathom Cruises in The Dominican Republic**

By Janet Lynn Music

Volunteer tourism is a market driven approach to development. Volunteer tourism was developed to serve travelers who want to practice meaningful experiences within host countries. Carnival Cruise lines created fathom (sic) as a venture to capture this target audience with impact activities as excursions in and around Puerto Plata Dominican Republic. These activities involve utilizing tourist labour to achieve positive ‘impacts’ on the lives of Dominicans. Exploring the perspectives of both cruise representatives, partner organizations representatives and tourists, it was determined that volunteer tourism is a preferred model of development due to lack of political interference and the sustainability of profit for project organizers. However, long-term sustainability of volunteer tourism as a development model is dependent on volatile tourism market forces, staged experiences, cultural imperialism and new profit opportunities through the commodification of poverty.

July 11, 2019

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## **List of Acronyms & Abbreviations**

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| CO <sub>2</sub> | Carbon Dioxide  |
| CLIA            | Cruise Lines International Association                  |
| CEO             | Chief Executive Officer                                 |
| CIA             | Central Intelligence Agency                             |
| CTCS            | The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service                 |
| CAMS            | Community Arts Music and Sports                         |
| DGII            | La Dirección General de Impuestos Internos              |
| EPA             | United States Environmental Protection Agency           |
| FOC             | Flags of Convenience                                    |
| FAO             | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| GDP             | Gross Domestic Product                                  |
| GNI             | Gross National Income                                   |
| HDI             | Human Development Index                                 |
| ILO             | The International Labour Organization                   |
| ISI             | Import Substitution Industrialization                   |
| IMF             | International Monetary Fund                             |
| IFAD            | The International Fund for Agricultural Development     |
| IDDI            | Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral, Inc.       |
| MPE             | Marxist Political Economy                               |
| MLC             | Maritime Labour Convention                              |
| NGO             | Non-Governmental Organization                           |

|       |   |
|-------|---|
| OECD  | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development    |
| PAHO  | Pan American Health Organization                          |
| P&O   | Formerly Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company |
| SAP   | Structural Adjustment Programme                           |
| TNC   | Trans-National Corporation                                |
| UNDP  | United Nations Development Programme                      |
| US    | United States   |
| USD   | United States Dollar                                      |
| UNWTO | The United Nations World Tourism Organization             |
| UK    | United Kingdom  |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development        |

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

In June 2015, the world's largest cruise corporation, Carnival Cruises, announced a new line of cruises to sail during the 2016 season to the Dominican Republic. This new venture, Fathom Travel Ltd. (Fathom), is positioned as 'social impact travel' and appeals to cruise passengers that wish to perform small-scale volunteer projects in place of traditional entertainment or cultural excursions. This new venture marked a departure away from mass tourism for Carnival and a new tourism paradigm within the cruise industry. Specifically, Fathom is marketed as volunteer tourism.

Set up as a traditional cruise, Fathom passengers embark on a week-long cruise from Miami, Florida. Included in the price of the vacation aboard the *Adonia*, a smaller cruise ship that sleeps 704 passengers, are all-you-can-eat buffets, a variety of a restaurants and bars and a modest swimming pool. Docked in country for 3.5 days, passengers can choose a variety of activities to fill their time, at an extra cost, with historical and leisure tours in and around Puerto Plata, including a trip to the Fortaleza San Felipe, a 15<sup>th</sup> century Spanish fortification, local beaches and museums. Fathom departs from the traditional cruise model in that its main pretext for docking in the Dominican Republic is to perform volunteer tourism activities. These activities are administered like traditional tours and include teaching English language skills to primarily Spanish-speaking children and families, tree planting, and water filter production, among others. Activities typically last half a day, including travel to and from

the site, and passengers are encouraged to take part in three activities. The short duration in country necessitates short time frames for volunteering. While traditional cruise vacations focus on fun and relaxation, Fathom focuses on ‘giving back’ and ‘education’ about the destination, the Dominican Republic. Fathom refers to its cruises as ‘authentic’ and ‘impactful’ travel experiences, while claiming to make an impact in the lives of real Dominican people. In this way, the cruise line’s volunteer tourism activities act as a differentiator from regular mass cruise travel for marketing purposes. Fathom seeks to reach a niche market of tourists that are not only interested in relaxation and fun, but also want ‘authentic’ experiences in the Dominican Republic.

As a former Spanish colony located in the Caribbean region, the Dominican Republic is shaped by colonial legacies and faces economic challenges as a developing country. Tourism comprises a large part of the Dominican Republic’s gross domestic product (GDP). Tourism itself is a service industry, but should be thought of as an umbrella in which services provide the foremost employment, but which also includes transportation, information and technology, agriculture and manufacturing. While tourism provides employment, low wages and reliance on transnational corporations (TNCs) do not eliminate poverty, or improve development indicators. Much of the population lives in poverty, with 24% of the country’s population living on less than \$1.90 a day (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2016, p. 7). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)’s Human Development Index (HDI) is composite index composed of development indicators, life expectancy, education, and per capita income, and is used to rank countries on their human development (UNDP, 2018). Scores closer to 1 indicate higher human development based on the indicators. While the



Dominican Republic's HDI for 2017 was 0.736 when adjusted for inequality, the HDI falls to 0.581, a loss of 21.0% due to inequality in the distribution, such as life expectancy at birth, years of schooling and purchasing power parity (UNDP, 2018, p. 4). This leaves a large portion of the Dominican population in a vulnerable position and more likely to accept and depend on precarious employment, underemployment, and unsafe working conditions. While these conditions are detrimental to healthy populations in the Dominican Republic, they benefit large TNCs by offering a large labour pool that can be exploited for profit. In addition, these conditions allow for an opportunity to offer volunteer tourism experiences.

## 1.2 Volunteer Tourism: Market-driven Development

Volunteer tourism is a niche tourism practice that straddles both international development and tourism. As a practice, tourists pay organizations to participate in short term projects, such as teaching, construction or providing environmental services of varying skill levels and outcomes. Though volunteer tourism replicates development projects in scope, it represents a move away from long-term development work that theoretically, has sought to overcome colonial legacies of mercantilism and race-based violence and a move towards the commodification of poverty, illiteracy and infrastructure such as water provision. Though not without its detractors, volunteer tourism has been championed as a new development paradigm by philanthrocapitalists, various segments of the academic community and practitioners. This is unsurprising as society increasingly takes a neoliberal economic approach that relies on markets to determine the value of a given service.

Capitalist markets and neoliberalism govern modern global society. At its most basic, a market involves an exchange among parties. The market is the mechanism in which units of production and consumption are valued (or not) and distributed (or discarded) according to the buyers and sellers within that market. Neoliberalism expands the market mechanism to include all aspects of society, removes any regulation that would hinder market distribution and promotes enclosure of the common good that allows privately owned entities to control access to markets based on financial wealth. This has become the institutional expression of trade and economics and represents a move away from a strong state role in distribution of societal needs such as housing, education and healthcare programs. Indeed, as market logics expand, so too has the idea of what can be valued or determined valuable by market rationalities. Not simply confined to trading widgets and services, markets have expanded to include the selling and distribution of those elements of human existence not traditionally valued in such ways, such as water provision, illiteracy, and waste management. A market society then, is a function of scale and of scope, in which everything in society becomes valued based on its exchange-value between one party and another, regardless of the will or intention of participants (Cunningham, 2005, pp. 130-131). For those that cannot access markets, financially, politically or geographically, elements of their very existence have become marketized, resulting in poverty, illiteracy, and/or precarious, potentially environmentally hazardous, living conditions.

Volunteer tourism represents a continued process of re-conceptualizing the definition of development as a suitable response to those income, infrastructure and social inequalities created within a market society. The responsibility for addressing these

inequalities that once lay with the state and non-governmental agencies (NGOs) increasingly becomes the domain of private capital. This re-conceptualization then, represents market logics as project work, that is, projects become valued as a commodity to be bought and sold by participants. Significantly, Fathom represents an adherence to market society principles, in which the provision of clean water, for example, becomes not a responsibility of the state, but a function of the market, in which the experience of providing clean water for families in the Dominican Republic is sold to tourists as a vacation activity.

The purpose of this thesis is to determine whether or not development initiatives, such as volunteer tourism, achieves their stated aims or if they simply act as a mechanism for profit generation for powerful market participants. Using Fathom as a case study, the research shows that volunteer tourism does not act as a mechanism to smooth over inequalities, but rather acts as a profit frontier for Carnival Cruise lines. In this way, Carnival is not acting as a development agent, but is participating in philanthrocapitalism, a neoliberal version philanthropic endeavors that seeks to make profits while performing philanthropic acts. Philanthrocapitalism seeks a return on investment in the form of profit for those who would perform charity (McGoey, 2012, p. 186). Volunteer tourism does not contribute lasting and overarching benefits to the people it claims to help due to the uneven power relations inherent to the model. This thesis demonstrates that volunteer tourism fosters racism, and commodifies elements that support the right to life, such as clean water, literacy and an unspoiled environment that all humans should share, regardless of their power within a market society.

Fathom is relatively unique in the larger tourism landscape and was created as an attempt at diversifying profit-generating strategies for its parent company, Carnival. The cruise industry is mature, with limited growth prospects, and these strategies require significant capital investment, as they include building large, state-of-the-art ships and ports to attract new passengers onboard. Further, cruises operate in virtually every region of the planet; consequently, new markets are exceedingly rare. As part of their expansion efforts, Carnival focused on the redesign of onboard activities in order to appeal to consumers likely to perform international volunteer work. Fathom must appeal to a variety of skillsets and engagement levels to reach the widest possible volunteer labour pool. This represents a paradigm shift for mass tourism, as it looks to embed tourists into local landscapes not typical of cruise tourism. In cruise tourism, the ship is the destination and is designed for mass consumption of food and goods. As tourists governed by the logic of a market society, Fathom's volunteer tourists adhere to the logics of neoliberalism, without interrogating their role as consumers of commodified poverty in the Dominican Republic. Carnival claims that Fathom fosters tourist engagement, valuable cultural exchange and the sharing of authentic experiences in host communities. Carnival highlights cultural aspects of the Dominican Republic as a way to engage passengers in traditional tourism offerings, such as cuisine, music, and art, while stressing the unique opportunity for community engagement not available for traditional cruise passengers.

Critics have expressed skepticism of the Fathom tourism model, noting that the short duration that the ship is docked in country does not allow for meaningful long-term change. In addition, cruise tourists have neither the skillset nor the knowledge base to

make meaningful changes to the social or economic wellbeing of citizens in the Dominican Republic (Kushner, 2016). Further, critics point out that any positive impacts gained in local communities do not negate the economic and environmental damage caused by the cruise industry (Hernandez, 2016). Finally, critics question whether consumers really want to spend their vacation doing manual labour (Hernandez, 2016).

The criticisms raised about the Fathom model have merit. However, I argue that this model of tourism is much more damaging than critics suggest. Projects that directly affect a small number of people cannot offset the damage that cruising creates, not just to host ports but also to wider ocean ecosystems and larger regions. In addition, Fathom, as a product of a market society, seeks capital accumulation and new profit arenas by commodifying poverty. Volunteer tourism operates in a development context described as Eurocentric, Universalist, and based on western models of industrialization and modernization that are unsustainable, environmentally damaging and that ignore the cultural and historical contexts of the peoples to which they are applied (Mehmet, 1995, pp. 15-17). As a business model, Fathom perpetuates colonial understandings of the Dominican people, and a racist and archaic view of people in developing states as inferior to their Western counterparts. Finally, while Fathom does not comment on the governance of their projects, ultimately, the model removes the need for the political expression of citizens by depoliticizing the projects. Carnival replaces the state in providing social programs needed by vulnerable populations through volunteer tourism activities. Fathom contributes to a process in which local communities risk losing their agency and opportunities for democratic decision making through their elected representatives. Market-driven development initiatives are determined by market values,

not citizens, once the process begins of reducing the role of the state from service provision.

### 1.3 - Methodological Considerations

This thesis employed qualitative methods using a case study approach. Before embarking on fieldwork, I conducted an extensive literature review in order to understand the theoretical underpinnings of volunteer tourism as well as cruise tourism. Secondary sources, comprised of peer-reviewed articles, public documents such as newspaper articles and books, media press releases, cruise literature and annual reports were analyzed in order to lay the foundation for primary data collection.

The fieldwork for the case study was undertaken in two separate periods. The first phase took place from July 9th, 2016, to July 23, 2016, in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. During this time, I visited Fathom's volunteer tourism sites with project managers in order to conduct interviews and observe the projects as managers would on the ground. The empirical research involved eight interviews with members of partner organizations and cruise representatives from six different volunteer sites that plan and develop activities for volunteers from the cruise. The interviews were conducted in person and ranged in length from 30 to 45 minutes. They were recorded and notes were taken during the conversation. I conducted ethnographic observations for the second phase of the research, from October 24th, 2016 to October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016, aboard the Adonia cruise ship during a regularly scheduled Fathom cruise. Participation in the case study allowed for additional ethnographic observation of volunteer tourists, cruise personnel and ground personnel over a period of three weeks. I received approval to conduct

research aboard their property from Carnival. The Saint Mary's University Research Ethics Board approved participation in the case study.

#### 1.4 - Thesis statement

This thesis examines market-driven development through complementary theoretical frameworks of critical political economy and post development theory. The research examines the underlying motives of Carnival and its philanthrocapitalism approach, which requires seeking a return on investment for social programming, as well as the function of volunteer tourism activities in fostering an unequal power relationship between locals and tourists. The research reveals that volunteer tourism is a pathway to profit and power for Carnival in exploiting the prevalence of poverty, the lack of social programs and environmental programs thus filling a void in the Dominican Republic. The case study allows for critical reflection on volunteer tourism within a larger, socio-economic context. Focus is placed on the underlying neoliberal, market system that celebrates tourists performing social interventions in the Global South, rather than situating volunteer tourism in the greater landscape of international volunteerism or as a niche tourism offering. The research presents a nuanced understanding of the reproduction of Eurocentric cultural and political norms of white, middle class tourists from North America within volunteer tourism as a practice, as tourist-host relations mimic colonial hierarchies based on race and class. Volunteer tourism initiatives designed with manageable outcomes and in partnerships with representatives of local stakeholder groups can offer benefits on a project-by-project basis. However, as the case study reveals, volunteer tourism can be a contradictory venture, frequently pairing highly

consumptive travel offerings with poverty alleviation practices or sustainable environmental protection.

Volunteer tourism is a source of capital accumulation that commodifies volunteerism and poverty and sells them as leisure activity. I engage the literature on volunteer tourism and cruise tourism to demonstrate the incongruity of combining these types of tourism, each producing unfavourable effects on the environment and the economy of host communities. The case study exemplifies that the search for profit trumps all else, as participants fully acknowledge the role profit plays in progress without interrogating their own role in the underdevelopment of host communities. Further still, participants foreclose on any ideology that is outside of a market society and fail to recognize the dichotomy of the tourist and the host. I demonstrate that volunteer tourism, as a market-based development initiative, maintains the structural inequality that is inherent to neoliberal capital as well as perpetuating colonial understandings of developing states.

### 1.5 - Chapter Outline

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 2 presents the literature on two types of tourism, volunteer tourism and cruise tourism. The chapter also presents the two theoretical frameworks, critical political economy and post development theory, that the thesis is built upon.

Chapter 3 gives historical context on the Dominican Republic and the conditions that allow for volunteer tourism to take place in country. Focus is placed on the political-economic landscape in which uneven wealth distribution grows, as well as the diminished



role of the state in interventionist programs. Attention is given to tourism as a growth strategy that exacerbates economic leakage and poverty. Chapter 4 investigates the case study and presents the research data gathered during both sessions of fieldwork in order to examine volunteer tourism in the Dominican Republic. Here, I examine the ethics and knowledge of ‘progress’, and tourists’ colonial understanding of citizens in the Dominican Republic. Chapter 5 discusses whether volunteer tourism could result in effective and equitable wealth distribution. I discuss market societies, in relation to the legacies of colonial and racism. The chapter concludes that neoliberalism, in the present context will continue to pair incongruous partners in the name of innovation that will intensify inequities for vulnerable populations.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

A thesis on market-driven development should begin with a cogent and universally accepted definition of development. Unfortunately, such a definition remains nebulous. Debates surround the operational definition of development as a concept and a practice, as well as outcomes (Kothari & Minogue, 2002, Chapter 1). To some, development is seen as a means to an end, in which an ‘egalitarian ethic’ should be realized for the greatest number of people (Peet & Hartwick, 2009, p. 1). This is an optimistic view of development that appreciates the potential of modern ideas and technology to lift all peoples out of poverty. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) views development as a series of goals that can be obtained through expertise, training, and grants. The UNDP (2019) has developed the Human Development Index (HDI) to “emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone.” Using a range of factors and variables, including health indicators, years of schooling and living standards, the UNDP promotes investment in those developed nations based on HDI (UNDP, 2019). The World Bank holds a large lending portfolio of over 12,000 development projects since 1947 (World Bank, 2019). According to the World Bank (2019), “three priorities guide [their] work with countries to end poverty and boost prosperity for the poorest people. Helping create sustainable economic growth, investing in people and building resilience to shocks and threats that can roll back decades of progress.”

That a single, universal definition of development is difficult to ascertain is not unsurprising. While it is more likely to achieve agreement among economists and

development thinkers and practitioners, that raising living standards and eliminating child malnutrition are positive development outcomes, gaining consensus on achieving these aims remains elusive. For example, the World Bank, in their quote above stress the importance of economic growth or an adherence to market stability that fosters development and insulates citizens from poverty. Carnival, through Fathom, takes a similar but more direct market approach to development, by allowing the market to dictate whether development projects are successful through commodification. In considering the path to development, however, a wider perspective on the mechanisms for change, state intervention, market solutions, international aid, etc., differentiates development goals from development outcomes.

Fathom, as a volunteer tourism endeavor, performs two specific functions within the tourism and development landscape. First, as a tourism venture, Fathom seeks to open new profit frontiers for its parent company, Carnival. Second, as a means of development, Fathom remakes the reality of the Dominican Republic in order to attract tourists and fulfill their fantasies of 'helping' in an undeveloped state. Two theoretical approaches, Marxist Political Economy (MPE) and Post Development Theory, are needed to understand the underlying issues present in the research. MPE reveals the function and role of Fathom in the greater political economic landscape, under the principles of global capitalism. Post Development Theory critiques the role of development as an agent of change; that is, through discursive analysis, Post Development Theory provides a greater understanding how development classifies recipients. Post Development Theory

demonstrates how development acts through the ideals of practitioners and calls into question the underlying motivations for development as a practice.

Underpinning MPE is the Marxist idea of society; that is, the social relationship of production, in which the goods that sustain needs and wants are produced and distributed (Peet & Harwick, 2009, pp 148-149). The control over the production of the goods that sustain human existence, shelter, food and water, lie in the hands of a small, exclusive group of capitalist owners. For the remainder of society, this essential condition of capitalism means performing labour order to purchase or exchange for these goods for their own existence, and for the existence of capitalists (Gamble, 1999, p. 140).

Production is used to continuously sustain labour through wages, but it is also used to maintain the position of the elite through surplus production or profit (Peet & Harwick, 2009, p. 157). This capitalist mode of production is not an isolated sphere within society but instead transforms and constructs society as a lived experience (Dimmelmeier, Purckhauer & Shah, 2016). Social relations then become commercial relationships in which all aspects of society have the potential to be assigned an exchange value, through the process of commodification. Fathom commodifies development aspects of The Dominican Republic to create a profit frontier for its parent company, Carnival.

Critical to this thesis is MPE's perspective on power, the ability to influence political decisions that dictate resource allocation and conditions, both economic and social. Power is held by those how own capital and generate capital accumulation (Gamble, 1999, p. 141). This research demonstrates how Carnival used its considerable wealth and market presence to create Fathom as a profit frontier. Through Fathom, Carnival exploits underdevelopment in the Dominican Republic by selling development

opportunities to tourists. Carnival used its power to commodify underdevelopment for profit through Fathom. Fathom, therefore, becomes the vehicle by which development projects have exchange value between tourists and Carnival. In order for this to take place, Carnival needs capital wealth to invest. However, Carnival also needs enough influence to persuade the government of the Dominican Republic to allow them to administer development projects. Carnival controls the manner of exchange (volunteer tourism) with cooperation from the Dominican Republic. MPE addresses the dominance of one group over another and the power of financial and political capital.

MPE is appropriate for understanding the wide perspective of society and societal behaviour. MPE addresses material and social imperatives, such as competition, privatization and commodification, which affect society at large. MPE provides necessary insights for understanding volunteer tourism and the case study Fathom as they fit into larger global political economy. However, understanding the role of tourist behavior in reproducing colonial ideas concerning underdeveloped states requires another theoretical approach.

Post Development Theory dismantles the idea that development is a benevolent practice, unbiased and without an agenda. Mehmet (1995) argues that development is unsustainable and dismissive of cultural and historical contexts as projects tend to be based on western models of industrialization and modernization (pp. 15-17) Critical to understanding the Post Development critiques is the concept of the “West”. The West refers to countries that dominate global geopolitics, through historical legacies of colonization and slavery that allowed former colonists to amass land and wealth disproportionately to the colonized. Development utilizes the framework already set in

place by governments and political cultures that perform international development – the West; therefore, development fundamentally reflects the pattern of Western hegemony (Pieterse, 1991, p. 14). Post development Theory questions the idea that a Western lifestyle, predicated on mass consumption and private property, is realistic or desirable for the majority of the world's population (Pieterse, 1991, p. 25-26). Further still, to design development based on socio-economic norms and ethical values of Western culture is to eliminate Indigenous cultural alternatives or foreclose on divergent cultures or lifestyles. This reveals that development reproduces uneven power relations between Western powers and former colonial states. Perceptions and meanings of progress are defined for developing states, creating a hierarchy in which the West is dominant and underdeveloped states are infantilized. The Fathom project replaces the narrative of the Dominican Republic as a middle-income country in a global economy with a narrative that suggests that tourists' are needed in order to help the country out of poverty. Ultimately, this implies that the country is unable to attain tourists' standards of progress without their intervention.

Many post-development theorists (Escobar, 1992, 1999, 2012; Mehmet, 1995; Pieterse, 1991, Sachs, 2010) subvert the concept of development. A Post Development perspective critiques the typical views of development that categorize populations in the Global South (Escobar, 2012, Chapter 2). These views generally classify underdeveloped states as unsophisticated, corrupt and impoverished due to lack of initiative (Theobald, 1999, Chapter 1). If underdeveloped citizens are not portrayed as dangerously violent, then they are portrayed as happy-go-lucky, mystical or simple (Bruner, 1991, p. 244). Fathom marketing material falls into these racist colonial tropes by showing the

Dominican Republic as impoverished, yet pristine, and citizens as technologically deprived, yet happy. A Post Development approach reveals the underlying colonial nature of the relationship between volunteer tourists and host communities. Post Development analysis exposes volunteer tourism, not as a universal endeavor for all states, but as a system that creates a ‘third world’ through tourists’ perceptions, perpetuating the colonization of the Dominican Republic.

The power to construct lies with those with financial and political capital to transform developing states from distinct cultural entities into states that failed to progress. In doing so, knowledge is created and used to normalize development to reflect cultural values held by practitioners (Peet & Hartwick, 2015, p. 250). In terms of this research, modern cultural values as held by tourists are consumerist in nature and reflect a market society. Tourists view cultural and historical identities as products to consume. Carnival holds the capital and the power to create and disseminate knowledge, and thus to “educate” tourists on the reality of the Dominican Republic. Here, then, we see that Carnival creates the rules of development and decides who can participate and the perspective they will hold on the Dominican Republic. The Fathom project highlights the tourist perspective by promoting one aspect of the Dominican Republic in their marketing material – the simple, impoverished but happy people. Tourists are not challenged to rethink images as presented because the experience that Fathom provides, engagement with pleasant people in impoverished communities, provides tourists with confirmation bias. Tourists are segregated at virtually every point in the vacation with Fathom controlling all access, virtual and physical, to the Dominican Republic. Thus Carnival constructs the social reality of the Dominican Republic.

Utilizing two theoretical approaches allows for a nuanced understanding of this research from both a macro and micro perspective. These approaches complement one another to allow for a critical assessment of volunteer tourism, how it diverges from its stated aims, and the unequal power relations present in its narrative of ‘helping’.

Volunteer tourism as a practice is often represented in such a binary fashion; that is, the relationship between tourist vs host, good vs bad practice and outcomes. Understanding volunteer tourism in this manner distorts the suggestion that volunteer tourism performs a neo-colonialist function of late-stage capitalism; that is, volunteer tourism commodifies the externalities of capitalism — poverty, infrastructure decay, and literacy — while infantilizing recipients. Given the scope of volunteer tourism, the use of each chosen framework is strengthens the understanding of the research. For MPE, the limitation inherent is at the consumer level: the units of analysis for MPE are classes of people or market or industry behaviours, yet volunteer tourism is an intimate endeavor with individual’s behaviour having an impact on host communities. Post Development Theory overcomes this by addressing the discourse that drives tourist’s behaviours. It allows for consideration of the effects of biases and knowledge hierarchies in which Western superiority is assumed in order to ‘fix’ developing states. Post Development Theory is limited in its ability to situate volunteer tourism in a larger market society context. MPE, then, offers the lens through which to view this manifestation on a large scale. By using both of these theoretical approaches, a fuller picture of volunteer tourism appears.



## 2.2 Cruise Tourism

The research case study focuses on Fathom Travel Ltd. (Fathom) as a new venture for Carnival Cruises. The cruise industry is present in virtually every body of water on the planet. In 2016, the industry's top corporation, Carnival Cruises, earned \$16.35 billion USD, with 48% of global market share ("Carnival Corporation & plc: company profile", 2018). A review of the literature on the cruise industry reveals questionable labour, environmental and economic practices that contradict many of the stated outcomes, as professed in Fathom's marketing campaign. Modern cruise lines mainly target lower to middle income-earners looking to enjoy sun, sea and sand (Pattullo, 2005, p. 203). These enormous, floating vacation enclaves contain casinos, health spas, performance halls, bars, restaurants, discotheques, and boutiques. The exponential growth over the past forty years in cruise tourism has raised concerns about environmental impacts, labour abuses, risks from accidents and disease, cultural impacts and economic leakage.

Ocean pollutants have many sources, including global shipping routes and effluent from coastal cities, therefore defining a causal relationship between specific environmental damage and cruise ships is difficult (Brida & Zapata, 2010, p. 218; Wilewska-Bien, Granhag & Andersson, 2016, p 361). Additionally, data on waste streams from cruise ships is not collected or is over 20 years old in some cases. Therefore, the precise depth and breadth of environmental damage caused by cruise ships is unknown. However, given that popularity of cruise tourism, and the expansion of cruises both in frequency and in terms of geographical coverage across the globe, deducing a conservative account of environmental damage may be possible in three main areas: coral reef damage; ocean salinity; and discharge of greenhouse gases. Klein (2011) notes that

cruise ships produce oily bilge water, ballast water, and air emissions from fuel as ‘normal’ effluents (p. 108-109). Pattullo (2005) contends that all forms of tourism tend to have a high environmental footprint, however, cruise ships have less room in which to treat pollutants, such as wastewater, before it is dumped into the sea (p. 137). Cruise ships adhere to environmental practices based on the jurisdiction at port-of-call, rather than adopt a common policy of responsibility applied across all ports (Brida & Zapata, 2010, p. 218; Klein, 2002a, p. 142; MacNeill & Wozniak, 2018, p. 395; Sprague, 2015, 108). Ports-of-call in developing countries tend to have less stringent environmental protocols than many Western countries.

Wastewater from cruise ships contains microorganisms, biodegradable organic material and non-biodegradable organic materials; these include detergents, pesticides, fats, oils, grease, nutrients, metals, and other inorganic materials (Wilewska-Bien, Granhag & Andersson, 2016, p 361). Dumping wastewater into ocean environments changes the salinity of seawater, as it alters water pH levels, causing organic blooms and increased nitrogen levels that can lead to acidification (Doney, 2010, p. 1512). Oceans contribute to the water cycle that determines the amount and frequency of rainfalls in global regions. Saline waters are less soluble than water with lower saline concentration to carbon dioxide, which decreases the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> the ocean can remove from the atmosphere (Durack, 2015, p. 22). Changing ocean salinity directly affects global habitation, including human settlement.

Cruise ships produce a large amount of garbage, including plastic, paper, cardboard, food waste, cans and other disposables because they are geared toward consumption (p. 110). The amount is significant; more than eight tons in a week from a

mid-sized cruise ship (Klein, 2011, p. 110). On average, each passenger on a cruise ship accounts for 3.5 kilograms of garbage daily (United States Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], 2008, p. 6-2). Pattullo (2005) contends that cruise ships discharge garbage at sea, including food waste that damages ocean ecosystems, essentially changing the water and sediment quality, nutrient levels and harming marine life (p. 138; Suzuki & Moola, 2010). Often, when cruise ships discharge food waste, they also discharge plastic (EPA, 2008, p. 6-1). Plastic discharge at sea is illegal everywhere but not subject to jurisdictional regulation. Suzuki and Moola question the lack of political will to police cruise ship dumping at sea, as cruise ships follow a defined route that is easily trackable (2010). MacNeill and Wozniak (2018) found that cruise ships that empty their trash in port, leave the responsibility for processing it with local municipalities (p. 395).

Marine pollution analysts suggest a large cruise ship can burn 150 tonnes of fuel a day, and emit more sulphur than several million cars for the same time period (Vidal, 2016). Cruise ships produce approximately 1.5% of global tourism emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> (Gossling & Peeters, 2015, p. 642). Eijgelaar, Thaper, and Peeters (2010) have calculated the average carbon emission per cruise ship passenger per day to be 169 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> (p. 342). This equates to 10,140 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted per 60,000 passengers, the average annual number to visit port in Honduras alone (MacNeill & Wozniak, 2018, p. 395). In comparison, the typical four-door sedan emits roughly 13 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> per day for an average family of four in the US (United State Environmental Protection Agency, 2018). Monitoring compliance to international environmental standards is very difficult due to the de-territorialized nature of the cruise industry (Wood, 2000, p. 345).

In addition to poor environmental performance, cruise lines also fail to provide safe working conditions and respect for labour rights for many of their employees.

However, according to the Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) (2013):

The International Labour Organization's (ILO) 2006 Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) provides comprehensive protections for the rights of seafarers, including those serving as crewmembers on cruise ships. Under the Convention, crewmembers enjoy specific rights related to all facets of employment, including wages, hours, medical care, annual and shore leave, and room and board. The Convention ensures compliance through strict enforcement mechanisms that apply to both ship-owners and governments. CLIA and its member lines fully support MLC, which provides more comprehensive rights and protections for all crewmembers (n.p.).

Terry (2011) and Chin (2008) suggests that the reality onboard ships are different than the public relations of CLIA, pointing out that, because cruises operate in a de-territorialized context, global human rights conventions and treaties are difficult to enforce in this context, as there is no binding global oversight body. Therefore, cruise lines can legally recruit workers from all over the Global South, often selecting workers from countries with high unemployment and impoverished populations (Chin, 2008, p. 5). This allows cruise lines to keep operating costs low, given that a popular value proposition to tourists is the low ratio of crew to passengers. Furthermore, Klein (2002a) argues that language barriers leave transient workers open to systemic abuses, such as substandard living arrangements, a lack of access to clean water and insufficient food allowances (p. 118). Gibson's (2008) examination of onboard crew demographics reveals that workers are stratified based on ethnicity, race and gender. As is commonly found throughout the tourism industry, different ethnic groups tend to work in specific and gendered roles (Gibson, 2008, p.49). Klein's (2002b) research found that workers from developed

countries tend to occupy higher positions within a ship's organizational hierarchy, which are better paid, less dangerous and highly visible (p. 23). Workers sourced from developing countries perform unskilled duties, such as cleaning and porter services (Klein, 2002a, pp. 123-125; Terry, 2011, p. 644). Gibson (2008) and Terry (2011) also found that much cruise ship work is hidden from passengers in restricted areas, is comprised of long hours, and garners much lower pay (p. 50; p. 662).

Data on labour compensation is protected by confidentiality; however, because cruise corporations are publically traded, executive compensation is public record. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is the top position in any publically-traded company. In the cruise industry, it is also the best compensated. In 2015, the CEO of Carnival Corporation, Arnold Donald, was paid \$9,373,908 in total compensation. This includes salary, stock awards and non-equity incentive plan compensation (Marketline Advantage, 2016, p. 14). For the same period, the CEO of Norwegian Cruise Lines, Frank Del Rio was paid \$31,910,348 (Mathisen, 2018). To put these compensation packages into perspective, P&O<sup>1</sup> wait staff work 10 hours a day, 7 days a week, and earn \$1.25 an hour (Chin, 2008, p. 8). A recent scan of the literature revealed that virtually no research is taking place on cruise ship personnel.

Due to the transnational nature of the cruise industry, ships can be registered in almost any country in the world. This practice, referred to as adopting flags of convenience (FOC)s, provide ship owners with strategic flexibility of operations by

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<sup>1</sup> Formerly, Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company, P&O is now a subsidiary of Carnival and provides personnel to all Carnival lines.

eliminating restrictions on crew and owner citizenship, reducing or eliminating certain taxes, and drastically reducing other forms of regulation on environmental and labor controls (Chin, 2008, p. 4; Terry, 2011, p. 663). Not surprisingly, most cruise lines have overwhelmingly elected to flag ships from countries that have adopted relatively few ILO labour agreements (Terry, 2011, p. 663). Cruise lines state that salaries are determined by position rather than ethnic characteristics. However, because certain ethnicities are relegated to unskilled positions and manual labour, and cruise lines are unapologetic in adopting FOCs with fewer labour laws or oversight, for all intents and purposes, salaries are indeed dictated by race. As Terry (2011) points out, this business practice is very reminiscent of colonial power structures (p. 663).

Cruise tourism causes significant economic leakage, which occurs as a result of revenue outflows from the port of call (Brida & Zapata, 2010, p. 214; Jordan & Vogt, 2017, p. 529). Fawcett's (2016) study of economic leakage from cruise tourism in the Caribbean suggests that the main source of economic leakage is the repatriation of profits from TNC control over their value chains (pp. 18-19). Local communities, if barred from access to port environments, miss the economic opportunities afforded by a captive spending audience. According to Fawcett (2016), passengers spend on average four hours in ports shopping (p. 22). Weaver (2005) argues that cruise lines actively strive to 'contain' passengers within their own property (pp. 165-166). This includes cruise line-owned port facilities and attractions that retain time and money onboard (Weaver, 2005, p. 166). This process, described by Wood (2000) as 'destinization', includes large ships, private ports and even private islands and beaches, through which the cruise line keeps all revenue generated from this part of the value-chain (p. 137). In addition, Pattullo (2005)

found that, because cruise lines are landlords of these port facilities, local merchant participation is replaced by international merchants in order to sell to cruise passengers (p. 206-208). Pattullo's (2005) research shows that cruise tourism earns less than half what traditional land-based tourism makes for a local economy (p. 210). Sprague (2015) discusses the lack of purchasing power among Caribbean host countries in respect to competition from neighboring islands that offer similar products in the way of sun, sea and sand (p. 102). This competition forces developing countries to continuously upgrade to maintain competitiveness (Sprague, 2015, p. 98).

Excursions for passengers are a major revenue stream for cruise ships and contribute to economic leakage (Jordan & Vogt, 2017, p. 542). Passengers pay a premium for excursions as part of their packaged holiday, and in turn, the cruise line keeps up to 50% or more of the price passengers pay on board (Brida & Zapata, 2010, p. 217; Petrick, 2011, p. 50). Packaged holidays sold through travel agents and tour operators do not benefit local service providers that are not collaborating with cruise lines (Brida & Zapata, 2010, pp. 216-217). Mitchell and Faal (2008) argue that, given the globalized nature of the tourism industry, no destination could capture 100% of the tourism value chain (p. 14). However, large cruise lines, with both access to destination resources and reach to international tourists, organize their offerings in order to capture the most revenue possible. As a consequence, tourists are segregated from local businesses completely. If local providers do not have an internet presence, or resources to establish marketing plans, it is virtually impossible to sell excursions directly to the tourist (Brida & Zapata, 2010, p. 217).

Cruise lines operate in a highly competitive market. Adherence to strict environmental and labour codes lower return on investment and profit for senior executives and shareholders. Additionally, there are limited ways for a large cruise operator to increase revenue and market share. Expansion opportunities require significant capital investment to build large ships and ports. As Carnival offers cruises in virtually every region of the planet, new markets are not readily available. Carnival perceives that a redesign of onboard activities and excursion as a method of attracting new consumers (Annual Report, 2016, p. 3). Carnival created Fathom to achieve this by redesigning typical cruise offerings that attract a demographic who wants to engage in local communities through volunteer work.

Coupling cruise tourism with volunteer tourism raises questions about this incongruous practice. Indeed, there is a cognitive dissonance within tourists who prioritize helping one group of marginalized people while ignoring another. Cruise tourism also adds to the overall environmental damage of ocean and coastal ecosystems, in order to cater to the expectations of tourist leisure and consumption. It is difficult to imagine how volunteer tourism through Fathom can offer progress and improvement while ignoring the very real damage that its implementation vehicle causes. If Fathom is to be successful in attracting consumers who wish to volunteer in the Global South, they must navigate the possibility that tourists will question the gap between practices at sea and practices in port. Indeed, for critics, Fathom lacks the moral authority to lead any type of development project because of the many flaws inherent within the model.



## 2.3 Volunteer Tourism

Volunteer tourism is relatively new to the archive of tourism studies. In his seminal work, Wearing (2001) describes volunteer tourism as that which “applies to 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” (p. 1). In contrast to mass tourism, volunteer tourism combines travel to underdeveloped, international communities with organizations dedicated to a specific development initiative (Wearing, 2001, p. 45). While many volunteers undertake travel initiatives based on some form of altruistic motivation, (Wearing & Lyons, 2008, p. 63), other volunteer tourists participate in order to strengthen their resumes (Baillie Smith & Laurie, 2011, p. 554; Jones, 2011, p. 532), or to undergo personal growth through travel experiences (Tiessen & Heron, 2012, p. 52). In the past 10 years, volunteer tourism as a practice has grown exponentially, as profit-driven corporations look to capitalize on these motivations. Information on the size of the volunteer tourism market is not readily available due to the lack of market research being conducted in this area. Estimates from 2015 suggest that, yearly, 10 million volunteers spend approximately \$2b USD globally (Popham, 2015). Private volunteer travel agencies attract thousands of volunteers yearly, despite the large fees charged for volunteer work, rough living arrangements and lack of political oversight by host countries (Benson & Henderson, 2011, 422). Tourism in general should be thought of as ‘consumption of experience’. Volunteer tourism is monetized in the same manner. As a profit-generating endeavor, tourists become

consumers of volunteerism and, implicitly, the volunteered (Lyons, Hanley, Wearing & Neil, 2012, p. 371; McGloin & Georgeou, 2016, p. 408).

Volunteer tourism is not without criticisms. Much of the volunteer tourism literature examines performing development work as a vacation option. Though, traditionally, development work takes place as long-term project based and paid work by 'experts' in a given field (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011, p. 112). Volunteer tourism, as an extension of development, however, is not merit based, but conducted by consumers with both free time and financial recourses. This raises questions about who performs development work, what perspective it takes and what regimes legitimize this practice.

Costs associated with volunteer tourism are borne by the tourist and the host community. Tourists are responsible for airfare, spending money, food, and travel insurance (Devereux, 2008, p. 362; Tomazos & Butler, 2009, p. 3). In addition, tourists pay the organization for training and placement (Palmer, 2002, p. 637). These costs tend to be higher than mass tourism as well as other niche tourism, such as ecotourism (Tomazos & Butler, 2009, p. 3). Zahra and McGhee (2013) found that integrating tourists into host communities strains community finances in order to match tourists' standard of living (p. 55). This confirms research that found tourists were a financial drain on the limited resources of host communities in developing countries (Guttentag, 2009; Palacios, 2010; Raymond & Hall, 2008; Simpson, 2004; Sin, 2009). McGehee and Andereck (2009) show that volunteer tourists embedded with locals often require significant resources, such as housing, food, and transportation (p. 47). Compared to mass tourists, who often remain segregated in enclave resorts, volunteer tourists can cause greater resentment among host communities due to this resource drain (McGehee & Andereck,

2009, p. 47). Despite this, volunteer organizations are reluctant to provide monetary compensation to communities, arguing that ‘handouts’ may lead to reliance on financial aid. Tomazos and Cooper (2012) discovered that, of the forty organizations in their study, all were against providing monetary support to local communities in which volunteer tourism took place (p. 418). Generally, volunteer organizations aimed, “to create self-sufficient and sustainable projects in communities in need” (Tomazos & Cooper, 2012, p. 418), without providing evidence that host communities would indeed become dependent on ‘handouts’. By adhering to this idea, volunteer tourist organizations conceptualize communities in the Global South as poor and lazy without validation.

Host communities bear additional costs associated with volunteer tourism. Burrai, Font and Cochrane (2014) found that hosts of volunteer tourists were often frustrated by the disproportionate amount of labour they performed to that of the tourists on a given project (pp 455-456). Wright (2013) suggests that this is due to the volunteer tourist ‘industry’ and tourist capabilities not being accurately presented to host communities; these misconceptions can lead to dissatisfaction among volunteers and hosts alike (p 248). However, Lupolia, Morse, Bailey and Schelhasc (2015) suggest that the impacts of volunteer tourism activities are not systematically evaluated by host organizations or international NGOs and that host communities value intangible benefits that could outweigh costs (p. 741). Indeed, there is no international volunteer tourism membership association that sets standards, develops benchmark indicators for projects and polices members who may perform counter to international standards, policies or laws (Reel, 2016, p. 3).

A major criticism of volunteer tourism concerns the quality of labour performed by the tourists. Volunteer tourists are predominantly white, Western and privileged, performing labour in underdeveloped countries (Lough & Carter-Black, 2015, p. 209). There is some evidence that regardless of the skill set or experience in performing a given job, locals will defer to the tourist as experts in a given field, forgoing potential local skills development and self-reliance (Barbieri, Santos & Katsube, 2011, p. 514; Lough & Carter-Black, 2015, p. 214; McKenna, 2016, pp. 562-563). As well, the lack of any consultation process with the local communities risks disenfranchisement of local people as well as perpetuates colonial attitudes by on-the-ground volunteers (Devereux, 2008, p. 360; Lough & Carter-Black, 2015, p. 208; McGehee & Santos, 2005, p. 775; Terry, 2014, p. 98). Projects completed poorly due to volunteers' lack of skill, in terms of constructing buildings, for example, can place both financial and time constraints on locals, who must repair poor craftsmanship or risk endangering local community members (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011, p. 119). Additionally, abundant volunteers in a community could bring changes to labour markets that decrease the demand for local workers (Guttentag, 2009, p. 544). Plentiful volunteers who have specific skill sets can create disincentives for the training of local workers (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010, p. 15).

Perhaps the most contentious issue for critics of volunteer tourism is the length of time volunteer tourists typically spend volunteering internationally. Much of the attention on short-term volunteer tourism has been focused on volunteer work associated with children. Short-term interactions with vulnerable children are problematic, as the psychological repercussions of perceived abandonment by children creates long-term emotional and behavioural issues that manifest within host communities. Indeed critical

findings from research on volunteer tourism involving children suggest that children can form attachments or recognize cultural and socio-economic differences between themselves and the tourists, ultimately seeing themselves as inferior (Lough & Cater-Black, 2015, p. 214). Similarly, short-term projects not embedded in local contexts may not be viable long-term, as a lack of funds and local project champions make project extension virtually impossible (Mdee & Emmott, 2008, p. 197). Even those short-term projects that are performed by knowledgeable volunteers may be destined to fail if succession planning is not built into the project plan. As Vraști (2013) points out in her research of two Western tourists who implemented best practices in a grade school in Ghana, once those volunteers returned to their home countries, the changes they brought to teaching methodologies were nullified due to lack of resources (p. 194).

Tourism, in general, appeals to the ennui of young, educated Westerners who view modern Western life as tedious (Canavan, 2018, p. 544). Researchers have found that this estrangement from the consumption culture of the West can be counteracted through charity and cultural exchange, while volunteers secure 'cultural capital' from their initiatives (Lyons, Hanley, Wearing & Neil, 2012, p. 370; Terry, 2014, p. 98). In this way, volunteer tourism acts as an identity creator for those seeking to build resumes (Jakubiak, 2016, p. 247). Travel is a positioning good in society; that is, the affordability of consumption *items* has facilitated the idea that consumption *experiences* are a differentiator. Volunteer tourism represents a new form of elitist discontent with the democratization of tourism, as mass tourism has enabled average people to travel (Lyons, Hanley, Wearing & Neil, 2012, p. 368). This speaks to the underlying motive for travellers looking to distinguish themselves from their peers and employment competition

at home. By centering themselves within the development narrative, tourists alienate communities in the Global South, leaving them without a narrative of their own. The underlying irony is revealed in MacCannell's (1989) summation that tourists are on a quest for "authentic" experiences, as they become increasingly disenfranchised from modern life. Mustonen (2006) suggests that volunteer tourism is the new postmodern pilgrimage, while also pointing out that modern life is that which makes this possible (pp. 173-174). Tourists view volunteer tourism as a direct pathway to the authentic, as it allows tourists to get close to real, non-staged, experiences (Chen & Chen, 2011, p. 439; Terry, 2014, p 98). Where once an authentic experience meant taking the path least followed, volunteer tourists must now *inhabit* the path least followed. Mostafanezhad (2013) suggests that volunteer tourists aestheticize poverty by describing it as authentic and cultural (pp. 157-158). This allows tourists to accept poverty superficially without feeling pressure to act. At the same time, tourists remake communities to suit their colonialist views, in which tourists sit atop the social hierarchy and true authenticity is scarce.

Volunteer tourists hold expectations regarding host populations. Host people must demonstrate poverty in order to maintain tourist's fantasies of 'giving back'. Host communities must also maintain a life predicated on pre-modern, or simple ideals and tourists expect a grateful reaction from the host community. Indeed, St-Amant, Ward-Griffin, Berman and Vainio-Mattila's (2018) research on clinical practices suggest that medical volunteer tourists act on a sense of entitlement, based on monetary exchange, that they feel useful, welcomed and that their labour is appreciated, regardless of host community requirements (p. 8). The romanticized 'other', as volunteer tourists view host

community members, perpetuates colonial/capitalist tendencies. Altruistic attitudes of volunteer work prevent volunteer tourists from political reflection or introspection. Indeed, ignoring the political realities of the capitalist system, host communities are relegated to the ‘frontiers of modernity’ (Vrasti, 2013, pp. 108-109). Power relationships between the tourists and the host community replicate colonial interactions. Tourists’ have higher standing in global hierarchies of class and race, and ignore their place in a historical colonial context, in which the Global South was enslaved and robbed of their resources. In doing so, tourists deny the host community’s rights to development, progress and equality in the name of cultural preservation, which tourists desire in order to escape Western ‘modernity’.

While the study of volunteer tourism within different academic disciplines has much to say about tourist motivations, there is little research into the theoretical foundations that support the nexus of volunteering and for-profit organizations that arrange this type of travel. Essentially, in the case of volunteer tourism, altruism—that is, the driving impetus for volunteering one’s time for social betterment—is being packaged and sold to potential consumers. There is no research that connects volunteer tourism with the commodification of poverty; however, slum tourism, the act in which consumers sightsee in communities of vast poverty, is explicitly, the commodification of poverty (Frenzel & Koens, 2012, pp. 198-199). Frenzel and Koens (2012) argue that poverty, in itself, is not the commodity; rather, it is “the potentially transformative experience of poverty that is characteristic of slum tourism” (p. 209). While tourists can alleviate symptoms of poverty if the tourist organizations choose to do so, often it is merely the tourist that is transformed by the experience (Frenzel & Koens, 2012, p. 209).

Transformations can be pragmatic, that is in the form of resume building and skills development, or transformations can be transcendental, in the form of changes or reinforcement of beliefs. Parallels can be drawn between Frenzel and Koen's (2012) conceptualization of slum tourism and volunteer tourism. Poverty is not the commodity in volunteer tourism; the transformative experience of volunteering acts as the commodity. Developing states remain passive or incidental to this exchange. In this way, tourists perpetuate and reinforce colonial understandings of developing states. Fathom promotes the Dominican Republic as a volunteer tourism destination in this manner. By highlighting the transformational experience for tourists, Fathom reinforces the idea that the Dominican Republic is backwards, uneducated and in need of tourist intervention.

#### 2.4 Colonial Understandings of Developing States

Colonial understandings of developing countries are engrained in volunteer tourism endeavors. Colonialism, as enforced by Western imperial powers, involved political control and economic exploitation. As a practice, colonialism required separating the colonizer from the colonized through infantilizing all cultures not found within the West as primitive or uncivilized (Said, 1979, pp. 229-231). This enabled Western societies to overtake the political and economic direction of developing countries through dominance by force and by technocracy (Ferguson, 1994, p. 8). In addition, Western powers were able to take ideological control over other cultures. Plum and Jorgensen (2012) suggest "ideology is a critical ingredient in ... fabricating a discourse ostensibly deemed as the truth" (p. 29). This "fabricated discourse" refers to Said's (1979) position that the West created the idea that developing countries are primitive and



in need of Western expertise and subsequent ‘help’ (p. 19). Volunteer tourism operates under the discourse of ‘helping’. Pluim and Jorgensen (2012) argue that colonial understandings of non-Western cultures allows volunteer tourism to reproduce colonial structures that reinforce dominant Western ideologies, what the authors entitle the “superiority–inferiority binary” (p. 29). This narrative normalizes and rationalizes volunteer tourism as a moral undertaking, removed from colonial understandings or ideological imperialism. However, given that much of volunteer tourism takes place in the Global South, the ‘helping’ discourse furthers colonial treatment implicitly by reproducing social structures present in the ‘superiority–inferiority binary’ (Pluim & Jorgensen, 2012, p. 30). Said (1979) contends that, in order for one group to deliver ‘help’, there must be a group to receive it (p. 12). For Said (1979), discourse represents uneven exchange, in which power, over language, ideas and cultures, separates Westerners from ‘primitive others’ (p. 12). This is reproduced in volunteer tourism, in which the tourist becomes the technocrat and the host community becomes the primitive other (Conran, 2011, p. 1464; Lea, 1993, p. 66). Implicit in the ‘helping’ narrative is a foreclosure on tourists’ complicity in creating inequity. Tourists avoid critical self-reflection on their role in reproducing colonial norms, maintaining their position in the superiority–inferiority binary (Pluim & Jorgensen, 2012, p. 31).

The ‘helping’ moral narrative masks the implicit white savior complex held by tourists, which is prevalent in many technocratic development and volunteer tourism initiatives. *White Saviour* refers to attitudes and beliefs based on antiquated understandings of complex issues affecting developing states (Chazal & Pocrnic, 2016, p.

99). These are influenced by social structures and historical legacies resulting from the colonial past. Volunteer tourism personalizes this narrative on a smaller scale. Volunteer organizations suggest that volunteer tourism is not neo-colonialism, but a method of cross-cultural exchange (Conran, 2011, p. 1464). However, Vrsti (2013) argues that volunteer tourism at its most basic is small-scale international aid that does not spread cultural exchange or even cross-cultural understanding of development (p. 19). Rather, volunteer tourism bestows tourists with the opportunity to perform ‘white, bourgeois and enlightened roles’ (Vrsti, 2013, p. 19). Ultimately, volunteer tourists expect host communities to be impoverished and less capable of progress based on colonial understandings and the superiority–inferiority binary (Pluim and Jorgensen, 2012, p. 30; Sin, 2010, p. 985).

The marketing of volunteer tourism furthers the colonial understandings of developing countries. Volunteer tourism is marketed in a way to appeal to those “...seeking an alternative tourism experience” (Brondo, 2013, p. 154). Both the consumer and the producer of volunteer tourism material are complicit in furthering colonial understanding of developing states. Elliot (1999) posits that consumers purchase products for their symbolic meaning, not their utility (p. 112). “The real consumer becomes a consumer of illusions” (Debord, as cited in Elliot, 1999, p. 112) and “buys images not things” (Taylor & Saarinen, as cited in Elliot, 1999, p. 112). This calls into question that which tourists seek subconsciously when consuming volunteer tourism media. Marketing for volunteer tourism reinforces colonial stereotypes in order to attract tourists. For Dei and Kempf (2006), colonial images, that is, images representing the superiority–inferiority binary, uphold the tourists’ sense of authority and control (p. 5). Marketing

volunteer tourism suggests, “solving the world’s problems and inequalities can be a time-out, and that the volunteers’ experience is disconnected from their own lifestyles and behavior, in the field and at home” (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011, p. 120).

## 2.5 Situating Volunteer Tourism in a Market Society

To understand how volunteer tourism can be marketed to appeal to the subconscious feelings of superiority among tourists, it is important to understand both the historical context of tourism as a means of development and the societal context in which both the marketing and the consumer exist. Tourism as a strategy for development gained prominence as early as the 1960s (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011, p. 113). Tourism investment has advantages over other economic sectors for developing states, such as primary resource extraction, which can be environmentally damaging, and manufacturing and which requires large-scale infrastructure investment. There is potential for linkages and business clustering of international tourism ventures with local initiatives within destination areas. Lea (1988) proposes that tourism is labour intensive and relies on host-to-tourist service capacity that cannot be outsourced from the destination location due to the service nature of the tourism industry (p. 7). Bennet, Roe, and Ashley (1999) point out that, as comparative advantage is a foundational economic theory underlying tourism development, there is high potential to develop tourism products based on the cultural, historical and natural resources of developing countries (p. 6).

Much of tourism development relies on mass consumption. Cabezas (2008) suggests that, like many conventional industries, tourism tends to use a top-down, for-profit approach to development, with profit funneled to a handful of international

corporations (p. 28). Buscher and Fletcher (2017) warn that relying on the comparative advantage of cultural, historical and natural resources to attract tourists monetizes cultures and environments, including people, as commodities (p. 652). This form of commodification implies that these resources are valued only at a price point attractive to international tourists. Given that tourism is subject to capitalist competition, developing societies must constantly yield to international market pressures, resulting in the selling of these commodities at the lowest possible price to attract tourists and compete with similar tourism offerings in neighboring states. Further, once commodification takes place, the complex relationship between sites and locals, vis-a-vis culture, history and labour, becomes a tourist's 'right' to consumption, crowding out all other cultural, environmental or ritual value for locals (Buscher & Fletcher, 2017, p. 655; Higgins-Desbiolles 2009, p. 68-69).

Understanding the nexus of development and tourism requires re-evaluating the inherent assumptions embedded in development philosophy, processes, and outcomes. One of these assumptions regards tourism as an agent of development. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) promotes tourism as a means of poverty reduction for developing states (United Nations World Tourism Organization [UNWTO], 2017, p. 6). However, Lea (1998) argues that current approaches to poverty reduction in developing states are often based on prevailing capitalist ideals rather than empirical evidence of successful poverty alleviation (p. 46).

Capitalism is a socio-economic relationship between citizens in society and among societies across the globe. As a system of trade and economics, capitalism encloses common goods for the personal gain of a handful of powerful actors who have

accumulated mass amounts of financial wealth. Capitalism is worthy of critique because it creates inequitable wealth distribution on a massive scale. This is the flaw inherent in the capitalist system and has far-reaching consequences for populations without access to capital, which are forced to sell their labour in the market. For workers, their time, education and thus their existence becomes a commodity to exchange for a value determined by the market in a system that seeks profit as the primary imperative. This results in the lowest possible prices for labour. The vulnerability for many becomes apparent when the market ceases to value human existence at all. In its current form, capitalism adheres to an ideology that has grown from models of Western market economies – neoliberalism. Coburn (2000) argues that neoliberal ideology adheres to the belief that markets are the best and most efficient allocators of resources – natural, human, social or financial – in production and distribution and redistribution (p. 138). Beyond economic thought however, neoliberalism extends into the psychology of human behavior, positing that markets are composed of autonomous individuals that act as consumers motivated entirely by material or economic reasoning (Coburn, 2000, p. 138). Neoliberalism also sees competition among producers as the primary vehicle for innovation (Coburn, 2000, p. 138).

Neoliberal ideology, as the dominant economic paradigm, began in earnest in the 1980s. Prior to this period, the relationship between the state and the market tended to be symbiotic. Though the exact function of states and markets varied among different states, the market fostered economic growth and the state compensated for uneven income distribution created by the system through social programming in education, healthcare and affordable housing. The state played an integral role in mitigating societal problems.

However, spurred on by economic crisis during the late 1970s, many Western governments, notably the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US), supported by elitist and conservative academics and media, suggested that these crises were caused by state intervention in the economy, distorting the otherwise positive outcomes made possible by free markets. Since then, the role of the state has been continuously diminished and consigned to create the conditions under which the markets could function to create and distribute wealth without intervention.

Neoliberal ideology has seeped into virtually all facets of modern society. David Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as “a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (p. 2). Coburn (2000) suggests that “the essence of neoliberalism is a more or less thoroughgoing adherence to the virtues of a market economy, and, by extension, a market-oriented society, that the economy, the state and civil society are, in fact, inextricably interrelated” (p. 138). In this way, every aspect of society becomes monetized and commodified. The implication is that everything in society and the public good, including those items necessary to maintain and reproduce life, such as clean water and healthcare, becomes an individual’s responsibility and is predicated on their willingness or ability to pay. For the overwhelming majority of citizens in globalized society, survival and reproduction then becomes contingent on selling their labour in the market. A market society leaves citizens in a vulnerable position as they compete in the labour market. Even for those able to

access the labour market, there is no guarantee that employment will not be precarious. The capitalist imperative of profit maximization often comes at the expense of well-paying, secure jobs, as corporations will cut wages and provide less-than-ideal working conditions in order to reduce operating costs and increase profit. Neoliberalism, then, has widespread repercussions for vulnerable populations within its sphere of influence. Once state social programs are removed in favour of market solutions, and the labour market remains precarious or inaccessible, society lacks a safety net to protect vulnerable populations against poverty and the repercussions that result from poverty, such as decreased life expectancy, violence and exploitation.

To all appearances, volunteer tourism, as a specific niche market, does not readily lend itself to cruising. However, understanding the logics of neoliberal capitalism clarifies Carnival's decision to break into this market. Peck (2010) discusses the inherent contradiction in which the neoliberal project is utilized to mitigate the social problems it causes by moving "from dogmatic deregulation to market-friendly reregulation, from structural adjustment to good governance, from budget cuts to regulation-by-audit, from welfare retrenchment to active social policy, from privatization to public-private partnerships, and from greed-is-good to markets-with-morals" (p. 106). However, as Vrasti (2013) points out, this response by proponents of neoliberalism does little "to reign in the hegemony of market principles over social life" to which society is vulnerable (p. 69). Volunteer tourism is a neoliberal response in which the market system, responsible for creating poverty by removing the state from offering programming that can be easily accessed by all citizens regardless of income, shifts the cost of poverty alleviation to

tourists and away from state intervention or the political sphere altogether. However, volunteer tourism assumes that a market response is the best approach to illiteracy, a lack of access to education initiatives, and a range of environmental problems such as lack of waste management infrastructure and deforestation. This masks the underlying problem of structural inequality inherent to the market system. Zizek (2008) points out that these acts are hypocritical because they perpetuate the issues they propose to overcome (p. 23). That is, the market causes gaps (poverty) in wealth distribution due to capital accumulation and lack of market access for many. Private sector firms then seek to capitalize on these gaps in the name of innovation. Neoliberalism does not allow for government intervention to perform wealth distribution, therefore private capital acts as both the cause and solution to poverty. Volunteer tourism represents this idea perfectly. For example, in this case study, Fathom offers literacy programs to Dominican children. In fact, the Dominican Republic has the lowest regional spending percentage in the region on education programs (“Dominican Republic”, 2017). Carnival, with the global market share of cruise revenues, seeks to pay as little tax as possible to the Dominican Republic, thus making literacy programs necessary for many impoverished Dominicans. Surreptitiously, organizations that offer volunteer tourism mask “business-as-usual in a new moral cloth [that] makes it increasingly difficult to question the conditions that make the oxymoron of [neoliberal] ‘capitalism with morals’ necessary in the first place” (Vrasti. 2013, p. 69).

Volunteer tourism exists within the tourism market as an adventure in correcting global inequities, without interrogating the role tourism plays in generating those



inequities. As the prevalence of volunteer tourism grows, recipients of volunteer projects are at risk of exploitation and segregation that sees them perpetually impoverished, marginalized and commodified as an authentic travel experience. Therefore volunteer tourism must be explored, not as niche tourism model with right versus wrong practices, but as a neoliberal project with harmful consequences for local populations when undertaken. As an experience, volunteer tourism offers an opportunity to engage with local communities; however, as a concept, volunteer tourism strengthens neoliberal capitalist structures through hierarchies among stakeholders, removing state intervention and contributing to a market society.

Volunteer tourism is often marketed as a form of philanthropic giving.

Philanthropy is a humanist philosophy that involves using private wealth for the promotion of a public good<sup>2</sup>. Philanthropy is contingent on wealthy benefactors and is generally focused on larger societal issues that align closely with the benefactors' personal values. Philanthrocapitalists seek to make profit from their philanthropic activities. Access to education, disease eradication, and environment conservation endeavors are among the most common philanthropic projects of philanthrocapitalists. Zizek (as quoted in Kapoor, 2013) refers to these societal problems as secondary malfunctions of capitalism, as they are externalities of business practices that prioritize profit maximization as discussed above (p. 64). Volunteer tourists, though not capitalists, mimic capitalist behaviours through their desire to consume and the fundamental role

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<sup>2</sup> Philanthropy differs from charity, although there are similarities in practice. Charity aims to the smooth over gaps of a particular and acute social problem, where the problem persists but the severity of the problem is diminished (Wright, 2001, p. 400). Philanthropy is thought to address the underlying causes of a given socio-economic problem. Neither charity nor philanthropy addresses the structural causes that create inequality that necessitates these activities (Wright, 2001, p. 400).

consumerism plays in perpetuating the capitalist structure. Volunteer tourism appeals to consumers' vague dissatisfaction of everyday life by reproducing the consumerist system within which this dissatisfaction is an essential piece<sup>3</sup>. It is this dissatisfaction, for example, with bodies, image, routines and wealth, which is built into marketing campaigns and drives consumers to consume more (Stavrakakis 1999, p. 49). For volunteer tourists, marketing triggers the dissatisfaction within and the need for adventure. It drives volunteer tourists to consume those experiences that can eliminate feelings of inadequacy, if only for the short term. Volunteer tourism is not an altruistic endeavour by tourists. Therefore critiques of philanthrocapitalism can be extended to the volunteer tourist, who acts as an agent of consumerism.

Philanthrocapitalists do not act alone in their capitalist fantasies. Consumers are complicit in the unequal wealth and power distribution of capitalism, as they buy into the fantasy, though for dissimilar motives. Wernick (1991) suggests that consumers relate advertising images for products to their self-image and their place within the capitalist hierarchy (p. 267). Consumers produce an "imaginary self" and search for meaning and coherence within the capitalist structure, through consumption (Elliot, 1999, p. 288). Branding and advertising images feed this desire for the unobtainable unison of the actual self with the imagined self (Wernick, 1991, p. 267). According to Elliot (1999), these images allow consumers to separate products from their intended use, instead offering symbolic meaning to consumption that allows for the creation of a "DIY self" (p. 288).

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<sup>3</sup> This vague dissatisfaction relates to the Lacanian concept of *jouissance*, which refers to the excessive satisfaction derived from irrational, transgressive or erroneous acts. It is a paradoxical act of participation because of risk (Kapoor, 2014, p. 1128).

Therefore, consumers cannot confront their role in capitalism's structural inequality because of an inability to reconcile the imagined self with actual self. This imagined self-image aligns perfectly with the volunteer tourism model. Volunteer tourists see themselves as benevolent actors solving social problems and not as consumers giving symbolic meaning to their leisure activities (Vrasti, 2013, p. 51). Charitable acts can be consumed endlessly, making philanthrocapitalism very much in synch with our consumerist desires (Goodman, 2013, p. 77; Kapoor, 2013, pp. 76-77). While eliminating poverty through philanthrocapitalism is a fantasy, it does not nullify the subconscious power of consumer-driven philanthropy. The subconscious benefits of consumerist 'giving' in any philanthrocapitalist context far outweigh any tangible benefits that such giving offers to impoverished communities.

That philanthrocapitalism is emerging as the next stage of development is unsurprising. Vast wealth accumulation has created more billionaires than any other time in history--2,153 people hold more than half of all current global wealth (Kroll & Dolan, 2019). Philanthropic spending is also at an all-time high, with 5000 new trusts being created every year (McGoey, 2014, p. 111). Simultaneously, states' pledge to offer international aid decreases as wave of conservative governments sweep Western nations ("Canada's foreign aid bucks global trend, drops under Trudeau: OECD report", 2017). While states grapple with meeting their international aid commitments, the public perception is that private institutions are picking up the shortfall (McGoey, 2014, p. 112). To the contrary, there is no, one private trust that closes the gap on aid commitments left by states. However, this shortfall leaves a gap in the marketplace in which

philanthrocapitalist actors find their niche. McGoey (2014) suggests that political influence and visibility of the large private trusts (the philanthropic arm of TNCs), enable states to delegate their international commitments to private actors (p. 112). By championing private trusts as efficient actors and fiscally responsible over state alternatives, states work to redefine development as a market good best delivered through market transactions. In fact, by using the discourse of economics, referring to poverty as a market failure for example, international development becomes the domain of private actors and market-driven development becomes normalized. The discourse of development becomes overcome by the discourse of business, drawing firms to enter the development market in order to seek profit. Volunteer tourism is one such model that perfectly encapsulates philanthrocapitalism. Tourists looking to gain fulfillment through consumption pay firms to perform development work, allowing the organization to make money while providing development aid.

Private organizations are not alone in utilizing volunteer labour to achieve development goals. There is a growing body of research on NGOs that use volunteer tourism as a development model. Ong, Pearlman and Lockstone-Binney (2011) discuss the future of volunteer tourism and the likelihood of established organizations maintaining market share (p. 686). This reveals the capitalist nature of volunteer tourism as success is predicated on the amount of capital one invests. Those organizations able to invest in marketing and consumer relations are more likely to succeed in gaining market share. Forte (2014) and Nutt (2011) examine NGO utilization of volunteers for humanitarian aid as a cost effective method of operation, though each find significant

drawbacks, including mismatching skillsets, lack of community integration and negative attitudes towards hosts.

The distinction between development NGOs and for-profit volunteer tourism organizations are often blurred in the literature. NGOs generally operate through fundraising, seeking to fulfill a mission, be it to eradicate disease, provide clean water or educate populations. NGO missions can be accomplished through volunteer labour. For-profit volunteer tourism organizations seek profit. As volunteers of NGOs seek leisure experiences and tourists seek meaningful experiences through development projects, missions of organizations become distorted. Each model experiences success to various degrees. Frilund (2018), however, declares that NGOs are ‘active agents’ that view tourists as a resource of free labour (pp. 360-361). Indeed, Tomazos and Butler (2011) question the role of organizations in the managing of volunteer tourists, as they balance volunteering challenges with leisure (p. 185). Benson and Henderson (2011) offer a strategic analysis of organizations, suggesting that this sector of tourism is risky and development projects must be varied and unique in order to attract premium fees (p. 422). This suggests an underlying basis for volunteer tourism operations: the pursuit of profit.

## 2.6 Conclusion

While generally thought of as an era of past political, cultural and economic expression, colonialism continues, as developed countries exploit former colonies through subtle methods of control, technical authority, and economic inequities (Escobar, 2012; Huggan, 1997). Volunteer tourism emerges from the concepts of Western development that reinforce neo-colonial ideals that developed countries are better suited to ‘solve

problems' (Guttentag, 2009, p. 547). Volunteer tourism regimes simulate and promote ideas of economic 'successes' from developed countries (Devereux, 2008, p.361). This 'privatisation of development' by for-profit agencies, while it does not necessarily preclude societal gains in host communities, becomes part of a wider agenda in which structural norms in the form of unequal power relations are maintained (Mostafanezhad, 2013, p. 321). That is, volunteer tourism reinforces neo-colonial power relationships, in which the tourists are the authority and host communities are subservient. Generally speaking, volunteer tourists may be sincere in their efforts. However, volunteer tourism as sustainable development masks the politics that underlay structural inequalities.

Volunteer tourists' lack awareness of the neo-colonial relations between volunteer tourists and host communities (Butcher & Smith, 2010, p. 34). Indeed, the power relationships that subjugate developing countries to unequal economic relationships enable volunteer tourism. In their search for 'authentic' experiences, tourists' remake host communities as impoverished. This allows the volunteer tourist to become the hero, in which the tourists 'rescue' underdeveloped communities, replicating colonial hierarchies.

Escobar (2012) argues that development is an ideological project of former imperialist powers, which used it as cultural imperialism to control and influence developing states (p. 59-60). The context in which development projects supersede state involvement and become a project of complicity for everyday tourists is the market society. Volunteer tourism falls neatly into the capitalist ideological response to charitable giving in this neoliberalist context. Where once the development agenda was pushed through large NGOs that employed technocratic expertise, today, tourists deploy the ideology of the West to developing states through for-profit corporations,

philanthrocapitalists, thereby reproducing the norms and values of neoliberal capitalism, which has created a mutation of development.

## **Chapter Three: The Tourism Context in the Dominican Republic**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Volunteer tourism needs specific socio-economic conditions in which to thrive. A brief historical overview provides insight into transformations of the Dominican Republic society that allows for greater understanding of the research case study, Fathom cruise line. This chapter aims to deconstruct the conditions that allow for the implementation of volunteer tourism initiatives in the Dominican Republic. In order to connect the theories described in the literature review with the case study, the context in which the case study is made possible must be understood. First, the chapter provides a high level overview of the population and climate in the Dominican Republic that makes tourism attractive to North Americans and Western Europeans. Second, the chapter examines the overarching changes to the political, social and economic landscape that has led to the current neoliberal political economy. Next, the chapter discusses the prevalence of the two main types of tourism development in the Dominican Republic: mass tourism and cruise tourism. Finally, this chapter explores how historical factors, coupled with contemporary trends in the global tourism industry, can create the conditions that allow for the commodification of poverty through volunteer tourism.

### **3.2 Country Background**

The Dominican Republic is a middle-income country located in the Caribbean region. Tourism is a key component of the country's GDP, employing many Dominicans across a diverse portfolio of sectors. The Dominican Republic is shaped by various historical and contemporary socio-political and economic trends and faces economic



challenges as a former colony and developing country. Poverty, gender inequality and low education rates force many Dominicans to rely on low-wage, low-skill, precarious employment in the tourism industry. While the Dominican Republic is experiencing an increase in its human development indicators, a large percentage of the country's population (24%) lives on less than \$1.90 a day (UNDP, 2016, p. 7).

The country is located on Hispaniola Island, in the Greater Antilles chain of islands in the Caribbean Sea. According to the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), roughly 10.6 million people of mixed European and African descent inhabit the island (2017). In addition, the CIA lists the population growth rate as 1.08%, while the average age for both males and females is 27.8 years (2017). The majority of the population resides on the coast, with 79% living in urban areas. The capital city of Santo Domingo is located on the south coast of the country with a population of approximately 3 million people (CIA, 2017). The national unemployment rate was 13.3% in 2016 (CIA, 2017). The life expectancy of 74 years is lower than the average 82 years for developed countries (World Bank, 2017).

The Dominican Republic is primarily a service economy. In 2016, over 70% of people employed worked in the service sector, in retail, government and information services, and tourism (The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service [CTCS], 2017). Tourism specific employment accounts for 16% of the total employment contribution (World Travel and Tourism Council [WTTC], 2017, p. 1). Originally an agricultural economy, only 14.4% of employees in the Dominican Republic are still employed in the agricultural sector (CIA, 2018), primarily producing tobacco, bananas and sugarcane for

export (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2018). Forestry, fishing, manufacturing and mining account for 17.33% of total employment in industry (CTCS, 2018). In 2016, tourism generated almost 10% of the country's GDP at \$6.9b USD (CTCS, 2018).

The Dominican Republic is a popular tourism destination for the North American market. The climate is tropical with an annual average temperature of 28 °C (Izzo et al., 2010 p. 459). There are beaches along 1,288 km of coastline. In addition, there are two distinct mountain ranges, which occupy 48,442 sq. km of land running east-west through the centre of the island (Davis, 2010, p. 208; Duffy, Stone, Charles Chancellor & Kline, 2015, p. 36). Average annual rainfall is 1,500 millimeters across two distinct wet seasons: November through January along the north coastal region and May through November on the remainder of the island (Davis, 2010, p. 208; Izzo et al., 2010, p. 459). The tourism season runs parallel to the North American winter season from mid-December until April. The Dominican Republic lies 1,525 km southeast of Florida making it a popular cruise destination (Carnival, 2017).

### 3.3 Socio-Economic Development in the Dominican Republic: Historical and Contemporary Influences

The Dominican Republic comprises roughly 2/3 of the island of Hispaniola, with Haiti occupying the remainder. The Dominican Republic has greater political stability, higher GDP and has a wider area of electrification than neighbouring Haiti. This can be attributed to early conditions for modernization and development, such as large land holdings and the natural resource wealth of the Dominican Republic, which provides resources for export and rich agricultural opportunities (Itzigsohn, 2000, pp. 37-38).

However, as with other former slave colonies in the Caribbean region, the Dominican Republic failed to develop to levels comparable to North America due to the historical effects of colonialism, repressive political regimes and the continued expansionism of global capitalism in which the country lacked the economic strength and size to compete with larger more robust states (Duffy, Stone, Charles Chancellor & Kline, 2016, p. 37; Itzigsohn, 2000. pp. 22-23).

The colonial years of Hispaniola were marked by slavery, wars, occupation, revolution and racial violence. Both France and Spain fought to control the island which produced lucrative sugar cane exports. Originally settled as a slave colony of Spain in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the immediate effect of colonization in the Dominican Republic was a significant loss of life and decrease in population of the Taino people, the original native island inhabitants, through slavery and the spread of disease (Diamond, 2005 pp. 342-343; Freyer & Sacerdote, 2006, p. 247). After a long period of Spanish colonial rule, Spain ceded the Western 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the island to the French in 1697. While slavery was part of the Spanish strategy for resource extraction from Hispaniola, the majority of enslaved Africans were sent to work in the sugar cane fields by France, in what is now Haiti, leaving a clear racial fissure on the island (Polynice, 2013, p. 23). During this time, many wealthy Spanish settlers, descendants of the original Spanish colonialists, left Hispaniola for Cuba and Puerto Rico, decreasing the population of Spanish citizens on the island (Turits, 2003, p. 27). The remaining large landholders, cattle ranchers and sugarcane farmers remained on the island, consolidating economic and political power (Diamond, 2005, p. 344).

The Spanish governing influence on legislative and regulatory environments, land-use rights, political institutions, customs and values (such as folk traditions and machismo), as well as on land use patterns, continued well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Castillo & Murphy, 1987, p. 50). While the historical interactions between the three main ethnicities (the native Taino population, enslaved Africans and Spanish colonizers) in the Hispaniolan context created a unique manifestation of what would become the post-colonial state, external influences in the form of agro-industrial capitalism, would define the socio-cultural and economic landscape of the Dominican Republic (Castillo & Murphy, 1987, p. 52-53).

In the 1870s-1880s, the Dominican Republic saw the return of expatriated Spanish settlers from Cuba and Puerto Rico as shifting political alliances on the island favoured Spanish-backed elites (Betances, 1995, p. 32). These expats brought with them new industrial farming technology and an export mindset (Betances, 1995, p. 26). These early capitalists arrived looking to capitalize on the growing demand for sugar exports in the North American market (Betances, 1995, pp. 26-27). Spanish descendants were able to engage with international trading partners and networks (Jones, 2008, p. 220). Focused on international trade, these early businessmen pressured the ruling elite to favour legislation that promoted large scale capital investment, made possible from large landholdings already in place from the colonial era (Castillo & Murphy, 1987, p. 53; Winters & Derrell, 2010, p. 601). These circumstances allowed for greater economic stability in the Dominican Republic throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, developing the preconditions necessary to modernize and integrate into the global export economy.

The post-colonial Dominican state was not achieved without violence. During the period between 1844 and 1930, the Dominican Republic underwent significant political upheaval through 50 different presidents and 30 revolutions (Winters & Derrell, 2010, p. 602). The United States (US) occupied the Dominican Republic from 1916 to 1924 in an effort to quell civil conflict as a result of an attempted coup d'état. This political unrest threatened the collection of custom revenues from imports to the Dominican Republic from the US (Atkins & Wilson, 1998, p. 50; Turits, 2003, p. 3). Independence from colonial rule did not lead to economic independence. During their occupation of the country, the US Marines established US-centric control that financially favoured US-owned companies (Betances, 1995, p. 27; Roorda, 1998, p. 101). The US ruling elite imposed new tariffs that established duty-free entry to many foreign products, which benefitted large import merchants and alienated the smaller merchant class (Winters & Derrell, 2010, p. 602).

During the Wilson administration (1912-1920), the US embarked on foreign occupations which were considered “Progressive Imperialism” (Winters & Derrell, 2010, p. 602). These occupations sought to develop health care, education, fiscal management, and infrastructure to closely align with counterparts in the US. US Marines enforced complete civil order in every town and district (Winters & Derrell, 2010, p. 602). Citizen resistance and dissent was met with violence and lengthy jail sentences. In an effort to maintain control over the population, Dominican soldiers were trained in methods described by Winters and Derrell (2010) as “peacekeeping” that involved arrest and detention (p. 602). However, democracy in the Dominican Republic was all but erased as United States’ Navy officers took the place of the elected president and cabinet officials,

establishing a military dictatorship (Winters & Derrell, 2010, p. 602). As a condition of US military withdrawal in 1924, a Dominican Republic military police force was placed as the new ruling class (Betances, 1995, p. 35). Thus, the military elite was formed. During this time, Rafael Trujillo was trained by the US Marines and elevated to commander in chief of the National Army in 1927 (Turits, 2003, p. 4). Trujillo then used his position to assume control of the Dominican Republic in 1930 through political manoeuvring and torture (Turits, 2003, p. 4).

General Rafael Trujillo's oppressive regime ruled the Dominican Republic from 1930 until his assassination in 1961 (Turits, 2003, p. 3). Trujillo's reign of absolute power came at the expense of human rights. Dissenters were frequently murdered or jailed indefinitely (Roorda, 1998, p.90). Trujillo established a secret police force that included a widespread network of spies and that was used to repress freedom of speech and freedom of the press (Roorda, 1998, p. 91). This force, along with the military, was used to intimidate, torture or kill political adversaries in orchestrated accidents or "suicides" (Roorda, 1998, p. 93). These repressive controls have had a lasting effect on the Dominican Republic by contributing to a large Dominican diaspora, whose remittances the state has become dependent upon, and by cementing an international reputation for violence and state corruption.

In terms of the country's economic development, Trujillo's regime nationalized foreign-owned sugar plantations and refineries and operated monopolies on salt, rice, milk, cement, tobacco, coffee, and insurance (Crassweller, 1966, p. 7). Trujillo's personal holdings included two large banks, several hotels, port facilities, an airline and a shipping line (Crassweller, 1966, p. 7). Trujillo controlled the Dominican Republic as his personal

wealth portfolio; despite this, during his rule, the country's infrastructure was improved and the standard of living increased overall for citizens. The Trujillo regime adopted Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI), replacing foreign imports with domestic production in an attempt to reduce its foreign dependency through the local production of industrialized products, financed through the revenue earned from the export of sugar (Hartlyn, 1998, p. 4). Agricultural and mineral exports increased significantly during World War II (Roorda, 1998, p. 194). Economic growth was also tied to public investment projects such as roads, dams, and electrification (Hartlyn 1998, p. 191). During the 1940s and 1950s, international demand created an economic boom of increased growth and expansion of national infrastructure under Trujillo (Hartlyn, 1998, p. 41; Roorda, 1998, pp. 194-195). During the 1960s and 1970s, agricultural commodities, including tobacco, coffee, cocoa, and sugar, drove the economy (Hartlyn, 1998, p. 137). Santo Domingo, the Dominican Republic's capital, was transformed into a national center of economic growth, through Trujillo's infrastructure expansion (Roorda, 1998, p. 194). These processes - ISI, agricultural exports, and modernization - contributed significantly to shaping the current economic policy and state apparatus (Hartlyn, 1998, p. 104).

The Dominican Republic's international reputation during the Trujillo regime was a violent and corrupt state (Cabezas, 2008, p. 76). After Trujillo's assassination in 1961, and the subsequent invasion and occupation by the United States military from 1962 to 1965 in order to prevent a communist revolution, tourists did not have the impression that the Dominican Republic was a tropical paradise (World Bank, 2001, p. 33; Shelter, 2004, p. 34). Insurgency during the 1960s from rebel groups jeopardized the physical security

of international tourists (Cabesaz, 2004, p. 998). In order to attract tourists, the tourism development strategy consisted of enclave tourism; that is, highly concentrated and isolated gated resorts next to deliberately-placed airports in unpopulated regions. Virtually all of the Dominican Republic's large-scale tourism development was established by foreign direct investment (Duffy, Stone, Charles Chancellor & Kline, 2016, p. 37). With the election of the Balaguer state government in 1966 and through subsequent World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans and development packages starting in December of 1969, foreign direct investment in enclave resorts became the tourism strategy of the country (Freitag, 1994, p. 540; Itzigsohn, 2000, p. 49; World Bank, 2001, p. 40). The World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank provided loans and technical assistance in order to facilitate a move away from state-led industrialization toward foreign direct investment in tourism development (Atkins & Wilson, 1998, p. 154; Cabezas, 2011, p. 28). This is well after other Caribbean states, such as Jamaica and Cuba, began to market their beaches to North American luxury travelers (Freitag, 1994, p. 540). In the early 1970s, the Dominican Republic began to develop its international 'sun, sand, and sea' tourism market (Sauter, 2014, p. 61). During this development phase, the country's first two tourism enclaves became a reality: Playa Grande, a hotel and golf course, located outside of Rio San Juan, 50 kilometres from Puerto Plata; and the Playa Dorada, a gated complex located in Sousa, 25 kilometres from Puerto Plata. Playa Dorada continues to represent the majority of Puerto Plata's tourism development on the north coast (Cabezas, 2008, p. 23). These development projects, financed by the World Bank, included the improvement of existing infrastructure, as well as the provision of an urban sanitation system, an airport and the funding of educational



institutions specializing in hospitality (Sauter, 2014, p. 62). During this time, the government connected road networks and established air transport infrastructure in order to promote designated tourism regions outside the capital, including Sousa and Punta Cana (Padilla & McElroy, 2008, p. 257). In 1987, Punta Cana International Airport, a privately owned airport, opened, allowing tourists to skip the 4 hour bus ride from the Santo Domingo airport (Padilla & McElroy, 2008, p. 258). Sousa, Punta Cana and the capital region of Santo Domingo contained virtually all of the country's international tourists (Duffy, Stone, Charles Chancellor & Kline, 2016, p. 36).

Figure 1.1 Map of the Dominican Republic



Source: Vidiana, 2011

### 3.4 The Dominican Republic's Shifting Political Economy: State Reform & Integration into the Global Economy

During the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the new president, Joaquin Balaguer (1966-78), continued with Trujillo's policy agenda. Balaguer continued to develop infrastructure, increased the size and role of the State, and encouraged the diversification of the economy through ISI (Sauter, 2014, p. 52). The state offered tax incentives and invested in the manufacture of Dominican consumer goods (Hartlyn, 1998, p. 138). However, ISI, as a policy mechanism for modernization, ended with the advent of the 1980s global economic crisis.

In the early 1970s, the global oil crisis forced many poorer nations' governments to borrow heavily in order to maintain their national operating budgets (Eifert, Gelb, & Tallroth, 2002, pp. 13-14). Large loans were given to fiscally irresponsible regimes, including the Dominican Republic, exasperating the debt situation for many developing states (Eifert, Gelb, & Tallroth, 2002, p. 14). Lenders were aware that the loans were aiding abusive practices by repressive regimes but continued the practice (Hertz, 2004, p. 272). For the Dominican Republic, the global market for sugar collapsed, and as a result, prices and thus income, fell. Sugar exports were no longer generating enough revenue to support the national economy, leaving the country in a severe debt crisis (Sauter, 2014, p. 53; Itzigsohn 2000, p. 47).

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the Dominican Republic succumbed to global recessionary pressures of increasing inflation and economic stagnation. These economic conditions, combined with burgeoning debt, led to financial reliance on international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank (Itzigohn, 2000, p. 49). By

1989, the Dominican Republic was severely indebted. The country owed almost \$3.9b USD to foreign lenders. This was a result of volatile sugar prices on the export markets, an exponential rise in the price of oil, as well as increased imports of oil, dramatically increasing interest rates on existing loans and an increasing need for additional credit to maintain national operating budgets (Itzigohn, 2000, pp. 50-51). The state had no option but to turn to the IMF and the World Bank, both insisting on predatory neoliberal reforms under structural adjustment policies (SAPs) in exchange for conditional loans that adhered to the neoliberal ethos. SAPs promoted the removal of central state control over social programming and a reliance on market forces in offering such programming (Sadasivam, 1997, p. 632). More insidiously, SAPs required states to allow for total restructuring of their economies, including the withdrawal from state central economic planning, fiscal planning and any social policy that was considered too costly (Greenberg 1997, p. 86). Since the advent of SAPs in the Dominican Republic, a segment of the population has relied on the informal employment sector, remittances from abroad, and emigration, as employment opportunities remain out of reach for many citizens (Cabezas, 2004, p. 996; Gregory, 2007, p. 34). SAPs promoted export processing zones, which hosted offshore corporations from the West. As well, SAPs required a significant decrease in public-sector employment and subcontracting, which resulted in the loss of job security and social protections (Biles, 2008, pp. 229-230). Domestically, SAPs increased the costs of imported foods, consumer goods, and agricultural inputs through currency devaluation that promoted exports. This generated more foreign currency in which to reduce deficits (Greenberg, 1997, p. 88).

The Dominican Republic experienced significant growth rate of urbanization (33%) from 1960 to 1999, as impoverished rural farmers fled from rural landscapes to participate in industrial and often informal employment in cities (Pomeroy & Jacob, 2004, p.77). Nonetheless, a significant proportion (20%) of the Dominican population currently still live in rural areas (World Bank, 2017). The vast majority of rural inhabitants are engaged in agriculture, with 71% of agricultural units smaller than 4.4 hectares (International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], 2019). At almost 50%, poverty levels for rural populations exceed the national average of about 20% (IFAD, 2019). Exacerbating rural poverty is the lack of critical infrastructure, such as emergency services, sewage treatment, water provision, as well as access to health-care and transportation (Wallace et al., 2019, p. 136).

Upward economic mobility remains out of reach for many impoverished citizens. According to the World Bank, for the period of 2003 to 2013, less than 2% of the population moved from ‘vulnerable’ to ‘middle class’, compared to 41% overall in the Caribbean region (World Bank, 2014a). Though the gross national income (GNI) has seen significant increases since the advent of SAPs, the most vulnerable population remains impoverished due to the stagnation of real wages (World Bank, 2015). This is likely caused by the increasing informality within the labor market. Much of the new job opportunities are low value-added service jobs such as housekeeping and petty commerce that is considered self-employment (World Bank, 2015).

SAPs mark the shift to a market society. SAPs transferred social welfare liability from the state to the individual, as market solutions to social problems were championed

by lending agencies based on a free market ethos that stemmed from neoliberal thought. In the Dominican Republic, structural adjustment programs served to substantially reduce social spending and redirect expenditures towards investment, especially in manufacturing infrastructure (Pan American Health Organization [PAHO], 1998, pp. 226-228). A 2010 study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development concluded that foreign direct investment in the Dominican Republic promotes a liberal regulatory environment, containing very few restrictions. The legacy of SAPs in the Dominican Republic has been the nation's integration into a global market society, leaving the country susceptible to market volatility and growing income inequality. Health and education spending was among the many social areas axed under the SAP regime as a required condition of the loans, as was social security (Itzigsohn 2000, p. 50). According to PAHO (1998), “Annual per capita expenditures on education during 1987-1990, adjusted for inflation, were 40% of what they had been in 1980, and the public expenditures on health were 7.5% lower. Together, health and education received less than 5% of public spending between 1986 and 1990” (p. 228). Because women are over-represented as employees in these sectors, they are disproportionately affected. In addition, disparity in women’s education levels in relation to men meant that women were often relegated to low-skill, low wage employment. By 1990, state financial support for public education was more than halved from 1980 amounts (Gregory 2007, p. 28). Education spending is also lowest in the region, at 2.2% of GDP, and fails to meet the UNDP thresholds for “low human development” at 3.8% (“Dominican Republic”, 2017). The Dominican Republic remains below average in healthcare spending at 4.4% of GDP (“Dominican Republic”, 2017), compared to Cuba, for example, at 10.6% (UNDP, 2018,

pp. 230-231), which did not enact IMF-backed SAPs. This is less than half the percentage of Western Europe and North American totals and the lowest among Caribbean states (“Dominican Republic”, 2017).

In 1995, the government enacted The Foreign Investment Law, aimed at opening the country to foreign investment (Sauter, 2014, p. 64). This strengthened the shift towards neoliberalization and the privatization of publicly owned companies such as sugar mills, mining operations, and the state-owned electricity corporation (Gregory 2007, p. 27). As the Dominican Republic restructured its economic portfolio in a way that prioritized the removal of trade barriers, lax taxation of foreign capital and foreign direct investment, SAPs overwhelmingly benefited large TNCs over local governments and domestic corporations (Freitag, 1994, p. 539). The Foreign Investment Law, in conjunction with the Tourist Incentive Law, in place since 1971, and the existence of a cheap labor force, enabled TNCs to further invest in large-scale enclave tourism in special economic zones that were designed specifically for mass enclave tourism development (Duffy, Stone, Charles Chancellor, & Kline, 2016, p. 37; Freitag, 1994, p. 541).

Reliance on tourism is risky and leads to economic leakage, as profit is accrued by international TNCs while only a fraction of revenues remain in country. Tourism leakages in the Caribbean region range from 45% to 70% (Fawcett, 2016, p. 19). These numbers are estimates, as many countries, including the Dominican Republic, do not collect the data needed to appropriately quantify tourism’s leakages (Fawcett, 2016, p. 19). Starting in 1969 and strengthened in 1971, the Dominican Republic established fiscal incentive laws in order to spur international investment into tourism development (Fawcett, 2016, p. 12). These laws offered attractive opportunities for foreign investors

through tax exemptions. Revenue taxes, national and local construction taxes, and taxes on the imports of goods, were exempted for a period of ten years, with a potential 5 additional years upon renewal (Cabesaz, 2011, p. 28). Estimates of forgone tax revenues, though difficult to measure, range from 9.5% to 16% of GDP annually from 1990 to 2003 (Fawcett, 2016, p. 34). Incentive tax laws result in fewer taxes paid to the Dominican government, as per their design. Consequently, while the all-inclusive hotel model accounts for 60.4% of total tourism sales, it accounts for only 50.7% of taxes collected within the tourism industry (DGII as cited in Sauter, 2014, p. 63). A 10% loss in revenue is significant for an industry that earns billions of US dollars annually. The Dominican Republic is reliant on indirect taxes, such as retail or consumption taxes, to drive public revenues. Tax bases remain narrow, and extensive tax exemptions across all sectors have persisted to erode the effective revenue bases in both high earning individuals and Special Economic Zones (World Bank, 2014b). Combined, the Dominican Republic consistently ranks in the bottom percentile for the lowest revenue from direct and indirect taxation in the Central and Caribbean regions (Aristy-Escuder, Cabrera, Moreno-Dodson, and Sánchez-Martín, 2016, p. 2). Despite the high rates of economic leakage, the Dominican Republic relies on the tourism industry as a key source of GDP. As per the terms of SAPs imposed upon the Dominican Republic, currency devaluation enabled increased competitiveness as a tourist destination in terms of price for international tourists (Cabesaz, 2011, p. 35). The resulting effects of these influences is that the Dominican Republic received the most international tourists of all countries in the Caribbean region in 2017, with over 6.4 million people (UNWTO, 2018, p. 17).

### 3.5 Conclusion

Since the mid-1990s the Dominican Republic has experienced strong economic growth and a marginal decline in relative poverty (Winters & Derrell, 2010, p. 608). Indeed, Winters and Derrell (2010) suggest that statistics from this period indicate, “the annual rate of GDP growth was 8.1% in 2000, 2% in 2004, 4.5 % in 2005 and 5.3% in 2008, [while] per capita GNI was \$4,330 USD in 2008” (p. 608). In 2015, the per capita GNI was \$12,756 USD (UNDP, 2016, p. 199). When compared to Cuba, a state that did not enact IMF-backed SAPs, the Dominican Republic ranks lower on the Human Development Index, has greater income inequality but has virtually twice the GNI (UNDP, 2016, p. 199)<sup>4</sup>. While gains are positive overall for macro-level changes in socio-economic factors in the Dominican Republic, they represent an uneven development pattern that affects sub-sections of the population disproportionately, including the urban workforce, who must sell their labour at ever decreasing values, and small rural landholders, who are unable to compete with global competitors (Greenberg, 2008, p. 86). Life expectancy has seen modest increases since the advent of SAPs, from 60 years in 1990 to 73.7 years in 2017 for both males and females in the Dominican Republic (UNDP, 2017). The Gini Index<sup>5</sup> for the Dominican Republic in 2016 was 45.3,

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<sup>4</sup> Cuba, under the Castro government (1959-2008), was governed under a socialist ideology that privileged health, education, gender equality and inclusion (Yaffe, 2016). Under the neoliberal economic standards of a market society, Cuba is an economic failure. However, Cuba was able to forego the uneven wealth creation and distribution created by SAPs and with limited resources was able to reach full literacy, eliminate child malnutrition and homelessness and offer free healthcare for all citizens (Yaffe, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> The Gini index measures the distribution of income among households within an economy by calculating the deviation from a perfectly equal distribution. A Gini index of 0 represents perfect equality, while an index of 100 implies perfect inequality (World Bank, 2017).



representing a downward trend since the year 2000 (World Bank, 2017). While the downward trend is encouraging, the Dominican Republic trails well behind developed countries that invest in social programs. A quarter of the Dominican Republic population lives at or below the poverty level, as determined by the UNDP. While indicators such as life expectancy and the Gini index show improvements to overall living standards in the Dominican Republic, these improvements do not apply evenly across demographic subgroups (Green & Griffith, 2002, pg. 58).

It is this historical context in the Dominican Republic that has created the necessary economic conditions in which volunteer tourism thrives. Large landholdings based on racial hierarchies have supported an elite political hierarchy that emphasized the enrichment of some groups over others. Globalization has enabled the Dominican Republic to make economic gains in the past 30 years, yet these gains are not spread evenly across demographic groups. Colonialism, foreign occupations and neoliberal economic reforms have signaled to outsiders that the Dominican Republic needs intervention in order to sustain Western norms. These legacies have allowed Western tourists to feel empowered to *save* the poor, without full consideration of underlying political-economic foundations that necessitate interventions. Volunteer tourism, as an enterprise, maintains Western norms and thought, while reinforcing the position in which the volunteer tourist is strong and the local is weak. As tourists perform projects as interventions, continued exposure to disadvantaged groups reinforces their pre-established beliefs about former colonial states. Therefore, the actual poverty created by historical legacies allows for the exploitation by tourism operators who use disadvantaged groups as a means to attract consumers. Further still, volunteer tourism relies on tourists

to hold colonial understandings of local communities in order to justify their continued operation in the Dominican Republic, in which the true objective of these types of initiatives – turning profit – is masked.

## Chapter Four: Cruising & Volunteer Tourism in Puerto Plata

### 4.1 Introduction

The case study for this thesis examines Fathom cruise line, which offers a weeklong cruise from Miami to the Dominican Republic. As part of the experience, Fathom offers excursions into local communities to participate in very short-term development projects, or *impact activities*. Fathom claims that the projects have a significant impact on the lives of Dominicans. Yet, these projects are designed based on tourist demand and are of low complexity. This ensures that volunteer tourists without extensive knowledge of local contexts, or skillsets adaptable to difficult social programming, can fully participate and feel valued. Impact activities act as social welfare and serve as a ‘band-aid’ in relatively benign social issues, such as literacy or infrastructure expansion and renewal. Impact activities do not address democratic ownership over the social safety-net or political solidarity for labour rights. These projects are in direct conflict with the overall mission of Carnival. The Dominican Republic experiences uneven wealth distribution (UNDP, 2018, p. 199). Carnival recognized this as a gap in the marketplace and devised a venture that suggested on the surface a strategy for impacting the Dominican Republic society for the better, but would crucially act as a source of profit.

The following chapter introduces the Fathom project, whereby the individual tourist becomes the ‘agent’ of development rather than the state, and deconstructs the underlying incentives that drive this project in a market society. Section 4.2 describes the location relevant to the case study and how Fathom came to be located there. Section 4.3

explains Fathom's impact activities and discusses how they manifest on the ground in the Dominican Republic. Section 4.4 reviews the research findings. The discussions in this chapter mirror the critical theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2. Escobar (2012) discusses how intellectual elites categorize third world poverty and violence as problems to be solved in order to justify development projects (Chapter 2); today, corporate entities identify these categorizations as gaps in the market in which volunteer tourism can earn a profit. Replacing professionalization of development practices is the marketization of volunteerism, in which development work is monetized. Finally, the institutionalization of norms and values, as dictated by Western ideology, align closely with corporate missions and visions that rely on market solutions over state-led interventions.

Unrestricted markets and the ethos of market society prescribe a reconceptualization of development by opening new markets of exploitation for corporations looking for profit. Further, the dichotomy between the 'West and the rest' encourages colonial understandings of people in the Global South that involve uncritical and racist bias of perceived impoverished cultures. With this in mind, four thematic concepts arise from the research data. First, the research reveals the perspective of participants on the larger project and its effects in the Dominican Republic as well as participant attitudes towards local citizens and communities. Second, the discussion turns to profit agents and cognitive dissonance among participants who ignored their role in the detrimental effects of the cruise industry because they participated in volunteer tourism. Third, participants identified profit making as crucial for the success of the overall project from a sustainability perspective; however, they did not connect profit-taking with structural inequality. Finally, tourists were observed questioning the innumerable ways in

which short-term development projects could be exercised without critically examining the role of the state in social welfare or a neoliberal market society.

#### 4.2 Case Study: Fathom Travel

Fathom volunteer tourism takes place in and around San Felipe de Puerto Plata (Puerto Plata), a small city on the North coast of Hispaniola. Founded in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Spanish colonists, Puerto Plata arose to become one of the Dominican Republic's most popular tourist spots until its decline in the latter half of the 20th century. The city's population hovers just under 300,000 people, many of whom work in the tourism industry. Tourism in the Puerto Plata region centers around two gated communities to the east of the city – Playa Dorada and Costa Dorada. These enclaves host all-inclusive resorts that cater to international tourists and have 95% of the 100,000 hotel beds in the area.

Carnival Corporation Ltd. and Carnival plc (Carnival) are the leading global cruise operators, with a 48% market share (Marketline Advantage, 2016, p. 24). This combined corporate body generates revenues in excess of \$16 billion annually, and operates more than 100 cruise ships under 9 separate brands. Aside from cruises, Carnival owns and oversees ports and port facilities, runs tours and excursions, and provides limited hotel and transportation support for the more upscale brands. Though Carnival offers cruises around the globe, North America is Carnival's largest customer base, with over 50% of the revenue generated in this market alone.

Despite the massive revenue-generating capabilities of this global brand, the imperative to provide shareholders with increasing profit places pressure on Carnival to

continue expanding. Carnival has a diversified value chain that has virtually reached the limits of logical offerings without breaching their marginal cost. There are limited ways for a large cruise operator to increase revenue and market share. In addition, expansion opportunities require significant capital investment to build large ships and ports. As Carnival offers cruises in virtually every region of the planet, new markets are not readily available. Carnival sees three distinct growth opportunities (Annual Report, 2016, p. 3):

1. New builds, including new ships and new ports in regular destinations.
2. Cruise expansion into Cuba.
3. Redesign of onboard and in-port activities in order to appeal to diverse demographic segments.

In 2015, Carnival created Fathom Travel Ltd. (Fathom) to achieve profit-generating strategies by offering volunteer tourism through redesigned excursion activities as well as onboard activities to support this initiative with the goal to attract younger consumers.

In the Dominican Republic, Fathom docks in Amber Cove, an \$85m port facility built by Carnival as part of their recent growth strategy. Construction of the 25-acre site involved 6 acres of land reclamation and stabilization from Maimon Bay. In addition, 94,000 square meters of land were cleared, and 6,200 cubic meters of earth were excavated (Reimer, 2015). The port facility accommodates as many as 8,000 cruise passengers and 2,000 crewmembers daily, with shopping, bars, pools and other recreational activities (Reimer, 2015). The port is gated with only employees and cruise passengers able to access the facilities (Reimer, 2015), isolating Western tourists from the local community. Fathom uses Amber Cove as the base for all of its onshore activities, in order to gain the most return on investment for Carnival from the expensive port build.

Consumption is encouraged in the port, both before and after participation in impact activities. A small information center promotes impact activities, showcases narratives of locals who participate in the activities (couched in language that lauds tourist behaviours), and highlights quantified outcome metrics of tourist volunteer labour. The center also acts as a marketing tool to attract cruise passengers from other Carnival brands that utilize the port for consumption and leisure activities. The center stands out in its conspicuousness, nestled among the high-end jewelry shops, low-end tourist trinket shops and the zip line, swimming pools and bars. Ironically, the port lacks beach access, despite being placed in a tropical paradise, possibly due to the difficulty in controlling consumption in that type of environment.

Fathom utilizes Amber Cove port facilities during the off-season, which corresponds with the traditional summer break in North America. This allows Fathom to market to a non-traditional cruise demographic, generally a younger demographic on summer break from post-secondary institutions, as well as avoiding any interference with Carnival's profitable, traditional cruise season, which runs from December to May. In addition to attracting a new client base, Fathom uses a smaller cruise ship, which gives passengers the false impression of travelling in a socially and environmentally conscious manner. Fathom has onboard activities that reinforce this idea, with workshops on Dominican art and culture, including paint nights and dance lessons, replacing traditional cruise activities, such as clubs or casinos. The menu has Caribbean offerings alongside the standard all-you-can-eat buffets, and there are regular information sessions on volunteer work in the Dominican Republic (Unleash Greatness, 2016, p. 21). All of these onboard activities are designed to give the impression that Fathom's presence in the

Dominican Republic is predicated on providing an authentic Caribbean experience. In reality, this is the opposite of an authentic experience, as tourists are segregated, guarded, and encouraged to consume and enjoy leisure time. Fathom must impress on passengers that they are travelling virtuously in order to adhere to their marketing campaign. However, they also must maintain passenger expectation of cruise travel, which involves unsustainable living standards, with excess water and food consumption and environmental degradation.

The focus of the Fathom experience is participation in impact activities, which replicate traditional cruise shore excursions. On traditional cruises, cruise personnel manage excursions, with little-to-no responsibility placed on the tourist. The impact activities operate in the same manner and were designed for tourist comfort, with air-conditioned transportation and access to food and water, as well as tourist safety, as a plain-clothes Politur – tourist police officer – accompanies each group of tourists that leave the port. When probed, tourists assumed that the Politur was an extra driver, not an armed guard. Tourists felt safe and at ease away from the ship or the port.

There are seven different impact activities available and tourists can choose to participate in three (given their short duration in port). These are managed by two partner organizations in the Dominican Republic: Instituto Dominicano de Desarrollo Integral, Inc. (IDDI) and Entrena (see Figure 1). Each activity is roughly a half-day endeavor, with the exception of the water filtration production project, which is a full day, including travel to and from the factory site. IDDI manages the Chocal Cacao Factory site, and the RePapel paper-recycling site, both of which are women's business cooperatives. As well, IDDI oversees concrete floor installations in local neighbourhoods in the Puerto Plata



region. Entrena is an American for-profit organization that teaches English Language skills through contracts with the Dominican government and oversees impact activities involving volunteer teaching within a community context and with children. In addition, Entrena oversees the Wine to Water clay water filter production site. Both IDDI and Entrena engage in development-related projects. Tourists have limited knowledge of the organizational structure of the impact activities, which remain largely hidden. Partner organizations preferred anonymity, likely to avoid confusion among tourists or to avoid deviating from Fathom's branding. The most visible role of the state was revealed in the partnership between the Dominican Republic Department of the Environment and IDDI in sponsoring tree planting at the Loma Isabel de Torres fruit tree nursery.

While each of these activities demand a range of physical labour, a portion of the work at the chocolate production site is staged. Fathom organizes the activity and tourists are told that are impacting the women's cooperative with their labour. Though not explicitly told so, tourists are led to believe that they are indeed producing chocolate bars for the market. Tourists did not question whether their labour was necessary, or impactful. For example, Chocal produces artisanal chocolate for sale at both the factory site and at Amber Cove. The impact activity was designed to speed production of chocolate bars and tourists go through a hands-on manufacturing process in stages. However, due to regulations surrounding sanitation, contamination of food products and consumption, the labour performed by the tourists, such as manually sorting cacao beans or pouring chocolate into molds did not result in products for consumers. In actuality, Chocal produces bars with machinery and training from chocolate-making experts with an \$80,000 loan from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Reyes,

2010; Roesli, 2010). The objective of this impact activity lies in securing a captive consumer base for Chocal's products, both at the factory site and most importantly at Amber Cove, as the port hosts thousands of tourists per year. Fathom is being disingenuous by selling this impact activity as a volunteer tourist experience, when in reality, it's simply a hands-on tour in which tourists are introduced to the chocolate production process. Ultimately in this case, the tourists' disposable income is required, not their labour.

In another example, RePapel is a paper recycling association run by a small collective that employs fewer than 20 women. These women gather used paper from area businesses and residents before repurposing it into artisanal stationery, jewellery and greeting cards. Tourists visit the site to assist the women with production. During this impact activity, tourists assist in prepping paper for recycling, including tearing, spreading and rolling pulp to create artisanal paper. This is a physically demanding manual practice that is neither competitive nor innovative for a larger market, nor does it realistically recycle enough material to impact waste management practices. However, tourists were *entertained* by the women of RePapel, who sang and told stories while performing the manual process of paper recycling. Tourists then became consumers of their handicrafts that were only available at the location of the impact activity. In both of these examples, tourists did not question their role as consumers in the cultural or financial exchange between themselves and the local women, nor did they question the value of their labour in terms of making an impact. They failed to realize that their disposable income was valued, not their labour. Further, tourists accepted the manual production methods employed at both sites, without questioning the role of automation in

market production, implying that unsophisticated business practices were expected and normal in the Dominican Republic.

During the water filter impact activity, tourists produce a clay filter that is fired in an onsite kiln. As part of this activity, tourists present a water filter that had been previously fired to local Dominican residents. The production of one water filter is physically demanding, requiring strength to work with the clay and lift the heavy filters that weight approximately 50 lbs. The work also required the use of masks due to the large amount of dust and air-borne particulates produced from the clay additives. This is a difficult activity for older volunteer tourists, as the open-air production facility does little to temper the humidity and heat. Tourist welfare is central to this impact activity, including all-day access to the air-conditioned bus, which is left idling to maintain a cool climate onboard. Tourists failed to recognize the impracticality of using a clay filter to provide water to a family over municipal water services.

Loma Isabel de Torres fruit tree nursery is located in a national park within the Puerto Plata region. Volunteers are broken into groups and process the seedlings. This activity required participants to engage with soil and manure. During the activity, local nursery workers engaged volunteers in conversation about the park and local flora and fauna. Once the plants were ready to transplant, the trees are then made available to any land-owning citizen of the Dominican Republic free of charge to reforest their property.

Student English and CAMS (Community Arts Music and Sports) is an Impact Activity that allowed Fathom travelers to visit a school and use curriculum designed to instruct 4th and 5th graders in the greater Puerto Plata region on beginner English concepts. The CAMS program was a new program implemented as a result of Fathom

during the summer months, when the school was not in session. It resembles a summer day camp program with arts and crafts, songs, and sports games. The curriculum is developed by Entrena, and teaches English language skills with workbooks. Each book outlines a different lesson that builds upon previous material with each successive week of travelers.

IDDI developed a program in which homeowners could receive a concrete floor free of charge if they met certain conditions. The household must have met a low economic threshold, and own one, single story home with dirt floors. Homeowners could apply directly to IDDI to have a concrete floor poured by volunteers. Concrete Floors is the only impact activity that charges volunteers an extra sum of \$20 to participate. This fee is used to pay for the materials used in laying the floors. This activity was not staged. This was an extremely physical activity that required the presence of IDDI volunteers to supplement the manual labour of tourists, which included mixing concrete, and shoveling and moving buckets of wet concrete into homes under the sun. Efforts were made to ensure the protection of tourists from heat stroke and sunstroke by constantly breaking for water and setting up tents to shade them from direct sunlight.

#### 4.3 Methodological Considerations

Carnival relies on the success of Fathom as a profit-making venture. It is a buyers' market in terms of the relationship between tourists and destinations. Fathom seeks to increase revenue for Carnival through selling development experiences as shore excursions in addition to a tropical cruise vacation. In order to get a complete picture of the impacts of this strategy, using Fathom as a case study is both practical and significant.

Therefore, it is fitting that the research must move away from generalizability and move into specific contexts.

A case study allows the researcher to understand how a person, group, or country functions (Berg 2009, p. 317). This research examines how a group of people (stakeholders of the Fathom project, tourists, project designers, cruise ship representatives) within a certain context (the Dominican Republic) responds to actions (volunteer tourism, marketing and practices) taken by institutions in power (Carnival Cruise lines). Effectively, the objective is to explore, explain and describe decisions and decision-making processes and contexts of the target groups, (Berg, 2009, 318). There are limitations with case studies as an approach to research. This approach is non generalizable for example, but, as Stake (1978) maintains, the research is ‘particularizable’, thus giving greater understanding to the research context (p. 6). This type of understanding allows for ‘naturalistic generalization’ (Stake, 1978, p. 6). These ‘naturalistic generalizations’ originate from the implicit knowledge derived from the rich detailed context of the case study. The case study was chosen because of the insight it reveals on the concept of philanthrocapitalism. Therefore, the specific situation of the Fathom case study shapes the interpretation of philanthrocapitalism at work (Bouma, 2009, p. 99).

The first phase took place from July 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016, to July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2016, in Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. During this time, I visited the Fathom’s volunteer tourism sites with project managers in order to conduct interviews and observe the projects as managers would on the ground. I conducted an ethnographic observation for the second phase of the research, from October 24<sup>th</sup> 2016, to October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016, aboard the Adonia cruise ship

during a regularly scheduled Fathom cruise. The empirical research involved eight interviews with NGO and cruise representatives, from five different volunteer sites that plan and develop activities for volunteers from the cruise. The interviews were conducted in person and range in length from 30 to 45 minutes. They were recorded and notes were taken during the conversation. Questions included probing on experiences in relation to development and, in particular, the experience with cruise volunteers. Participants were also asked about the profit principal vis-à-vis development and encouraged to respond to cruise and volunteer tourism critiques as outlined in Chapter 2. In-depth interviews are an appropriate method to understand perceptions of volunteer tourism because they enable narratives to be collected from individuals that are responsible for the outcomes of development project planning. The intent of these interviews was to explore what is meaningful to development project planners who are the drivers of volunteer work. The interviews explored the expected and unexpected impacts of cruise volunteering on projects and discussed perceptions of volunteering practice vis-à-vis cruise tourism.

Participants were selected from partner organizations and the cruise line, who were project or program planners that were overseeing projects with international volunteers in the Dominican Republic. These participants were directly involved with the cruise project. Partner organizations were sourced from the cruise line's website. A general email was sent describing the research and the author's intent in order to schedule interviews in the Dominican Republic. From these initial emails, the author was able to make contact with seven representatives in the host country. The eighth interview was arranged through a contact in the author's home city and took place in Halifax, Nova Scotia, while the participant was promoting his program to local schools.

Participant observation is useful for observing small populations outside the mainstream (Northey, Tepperman & Albanese, 2012, p. 82). The participant observation took place over a one-week period from October 24<sup>th</sup> to October 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Observation took place on the cruise ship Adonia, at the impact activities sites and at Amber Cove. During the field work four separate groups were observed: Cruise representatives, NGO representatives, Dominican workers and international tourists. Voice recordings, field notes and photographs were taken in order to capture the meaning and importance of the interactions. After the commencement of fieldwork, the author used these aids to triangulate results from the in-depth interviews with project and program coordinators. Triangulation is an important technique to ensure interview results are valid (Bryman & Bell, 2016, pp. 306-307). Care was given to avoid intruding in the normal functioning among groups so as not to bias the research. All participants were aware of the author's status as a researcher, as per the conditions set forth by the cruise line and Saint Mary's University. Observation was unstructured and without the aid of a survey instrument. Groups engaged with the researcher in a natural setting and sought answers and expected observations from the researcher. Informal conversations with tourists, cruise representatives overseeing impact activities and Dominicans that worked directly with international volunteers were viewed as positive opportunities to build relationships and trust and to collect data using obtrusive participant observation.

In addition, opportunities arose to informally interview participants identified from the different categories. The purpose of these discussions was to collect information on the success of volunteer programs in the community from different perspectives. The interviews sought to tease out local responses to this new type of tourism, that is, if it is

welcomed or resisted in practice. Similar to the semi-structured interviews of project planners, the discussions sought insights on the expected and unexpected impacts of cruise volunteering. These discussions were unstructured, as the author allowed participants to raise issues that were presented as ‘top of mind’ as well as contextual issues that may shape interactions between and among different participant groups. As part of the volunteer experience, the cruise line hosted two informal meetings that consisted of a group of international volunteers, chosen by room number. These meetings took place both before the ship reached the Dominican Republic and during the return to Miami. They lasted approximately two hours aboard the cruise ship in a casual lounge setting. The meetings involved discussion on impact activities in the Dominican Republic as well as examining tourists’ perceptions of their experiences as international volunteers. The international volunteers were aware of the author’s status as a researcher during these meetings and did not object to note taking during discussion. In an effort to ensure participant comfort, the author did not digitally record these sessions. The international volunteers spoke at length about their experiences without interruption, while probing one another for further detail and clarification. The author took detailed notes for review after the fieldwork ended.

Following the fieldwork phase of the research, all digitally recorded audio data were transcribed into a Microsoft Word document using Dragon Naturally Speaking. This included all in-depth interviews and digital field notes. Permission to record was obtained by the author in order to facilitate the research process, though the author did manually record key words to aid in the coding process. The author was diligent in recreating Word documents that exactly replicated the digital files in order to preserve any recurring



themes or outliers in the data. The initial objective of transcription was to gain general insights from the collected data. This was accomplished through deductive analysis using three types of coding. The purpose of the three-step coding technique is to recognize themes and conceptual categories that would allow the author to compare empirical data with supported theory through inductive reasoning (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 214).

The qualitative data were organized using open, axial, and selective coding techniques. First, the author did analysis using open coding, which identified concepts, themes, and categories in the initial sweep of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 163). Next, the concepts, themes and categories were further analyzed using axial coding, which refined the initial codes and categories into sub-categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123). Finally selective coding was utilized to compare and contrast categories and integrated theory into the analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 143). Eight semi-structured interviews with project and program managers were selectively coded in order to analyze the data for specific project and community conditions and for tourism development structures. Once themes were detected and indexed during open coding exercises, they were grouped into broader themes and tied back to the theory specified in the literature on volunteer tourism.

Context is important in social science research. Field notes, photographs, audio recordings and artifacts from the cruise ship and impact activity locations representing general observations, participant information and locational data, were recorded and categorized to ensure greatest information retention. Field notes and artifacts were analyzed simultaneously with other research data. This allowed the researcher to gain deeper insights into the research through triangulation, cross-examination and contextual

analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, 127). Field notes and artifacts confirmed reliability and validity of collected data among three or more respondents (Berg, 2009, pp. 7-8). These media and artifacts represent important information not present in the other research data sources, such as the in-depth interviews and participant observation, and contextualize non-verbal forms of communication, such as participant reactions, facial expressions, and tone of voice or nuances in language as well as sensory indicators relevant to tourism research.

There were limitations and challenges encountered during data collection. The research took place during a limited time frame in the Dominican Republic. While there is not a prescribed length of time to conduct fieldwork, generally, a thorough investigation of research sites and empirical data gathering takes time (Bryman & Bell, 2016, p. 353). The market demand for volunteer tourist style cruises decreased significantly during the scheduled time for fieldwork. This led to the cruise line decreasing the number of scheduled travel dates to the Dominican Republic. Because of this, the author had a limited number of travel dates to choose from in order to conduct participant observation, in addition to Fathom halving the amount of time spent aboard the Adonia. The reduced demand for trips to the Dominican Republic resulted in fewer tourists participating in volunteering opportunities. The potential loss of richness of data from reduced numbers of tourists was a consideration during participant observation. However, the author was able to foster deeper connections with the tourists that were on board due to the recurring serendipitous meetings during leisure times, meal times and impact activities. In addition, the author was stalled in her efforts to conduct fieldwork aboard the Adonia as Saint Mary's Research Ethics Board did not grant ethical approval

to research aboard the Adonia until permission was given by Fathom. As a result, the empirical research was conducted in two phases, three months apart. This complicated the interview schedule as well as observation at impact activity sites, as the condensed time frame necessitated strict adherence to scheduled visits to impact activities sites that were often outside of the control of the author.

#### 4.4 Findings

Fathom marketing used a mixed-media approach to attract clients. These include traditional printed 14 page, booklets available through brick and mortar travel agencies, and upon request through post, a website – [fathom.org](http://fathom.org), and a social media campaign. The social media campaign consisted of professional photos provided by Fathom, as well as use of hash-tags that connect tourist photos to fathom pages allowing for maximum impressions across new media platforms, Instagram, Twitter, & Facebook. The most prevalent hash-tag present across new media is *#traveldeep*. This conveys to potential tourists that travelling with Fathom is different than conventional cruises. Without offering specifics, this allows tourists to use their own frame of reference to define depth of travel. Indeed, much of the text across Fathom platforms remains vague. Apart from information on price points, descriptions of the Adonia and the travel itinerary, there is cursory acknowledgment of the Dominican Republic Words such as ‘impact’, ‘purpose’, ‘community’, ‘give’, ‘inspire’ and ‘transform’ are used throughout the marketing literature and offer enough guidance to tourists to imbue them with a sense of altruism, while allowing them to define altruism for themselves.

Images are the predominant communication vehicle for Fathom across marketing platforms. Vast rural landscapes are presented as acres of green jungle and tropical beaches, suggesting that the Dominican is untouched by the reality of modern civilization. The people presented within are easily classified: tourists are thin and coifed, and wearing stylish clothing. Locals are dressed in clothing denoting their employment roles, matching t-shirts with logos or aprons, and are heavy set. All are smiling. The promotional material shows locals posing in front of small, dilapidated buildings that lack landscaping. Many buildings are simple, one-story edifices made from concrete blocks, and painted in bright colours. It's welcoming. While the Dominican Republic represented in the promotional material looks beautiful but poor, the poverty presented is modest. It suggests that people are poor but happy, that they lack technology, but are not suffering.

Vague but aspirational text coupled with inviting images of landscapes appeal to tourists. Carnival, with lengthy experience in consumer service in leisure travel, has calculated that tourists want beauty and happiness while on vacation. The marketing literature works for two separate market segments, those who wish to participate in leisure travel, beach trips, museums etc.; and those that want to participate in community engagement. While Fathom highlights impact activities as excursions, the marketing literature reveals that Carnival does not contend that tourists will make any real gains in the Dominican Republic during their time in country otherwise the promotional material would highlight those areas. When Fathom was initially launched in June 2015, the website offered information regarding municipal infrastructure presence and income inequality. "More than 3 million Dominicans don't have access to piped water. As Fathom™ travelers participate in the production and distribution of more than 5,000 clay

water filters, far fewer children and adults will miss school or work due to water-borne illnesses. More than 3 million Dominicans don't have access to piped water. As Fathom™ travelers participate in the production and distribution of more than 5,000 clay water filters, far fewer children and adults will miss school or work due to water-borne illnesses" ("On the Ground, 2015). However, by December, these short informational blurbs were replaced with vague clichés about "giving back" and "travelling with heart". It's clear from the marketing material that Fathom is a volunteer tourism venture that stresses the tourism piece. From the website (2016), "In your free time, there are lush tropical beaches to sink your bare toes into. Restaurants, bars and shops to explore in the quiet port of Amber Cove. A coastline and mountains to hike, or just to wander. Opportunities to learn more about the culture or spend time with local families. To be sure, your commitment to having an impact is the mission that's brought you here. But it won't take you long to realize that the serene beauty of this place is going to have an impact on you, too." Here, the tourist is centered in the Dominican Republic leisure landscape.

Missing from representations are garbage, emaciated animals, tent-living arrangements and crumbling infrastructure, all of which are present for volunteer tourists to view on the way to individual impact activities. While it is unsurprising that these items are not highlighted in marketing literature, the lack of acknowledgement of these came as culture shock to tourists who were unprepared for this confrontation with poverty. These elements in the landscape are revealing of the failure of market-driven solutions to social problems. Addressing these social problems does not provide return on investment for ventures looking to profit from development initiatives and therefore

remain unaddressed. Indeed, Carnival did not invest in projects that would address the most visible and urgent needs in the Dominican Republic. It would have been a costly endeavor to skills train and house volunteers in order to make an impact in these areas. This, essentially, is the primary shortcoming of market-driven development.

The cruise line collects cumulative impact data. At the time of the first research trip to the Dominican Republic in July, 2016, Fathom had made 8 trips to the Dominican Republic. The data provided in Table 1 below was presented to the researcher by a Fathom representative without corroborating evidence during this first field excursion.

| Impact Activity                            | Impact   | Results   |
|--|--|---|
| Reforestation and Nursery                  | 13,074 seedlings and plants were planted.  | With time this will lead to more nutrient-rich soil, reduction in soil loss, improved localized air and water quality, an increase in localized biodiversity, and higher agricultural yields.   |
| Cacao and Women's Chocolate Cooperative    | 2,234 pounds of cacao nibs cleaned, which translates to 66,522 finished chocolate bars <sup>6</sup> .<br><br>28,249 products wrapped, packaged, and prepared for sale.<br><br>4,177 cacao seeds planted. | Travelers' direct impact helps this company grow and thrive, as traveler participation increases both sales and production. As Chocal grows, additional critical income opportunities become available in the region, and the overall well-being of Chocal's own employees increases.<br><br>The cacao seeds planted will become seedlings, and those seedlings will be distributed at a reduced cost to farmers in the area. Eventually some of the cacao harvested from those trees will find its way back to Chocal, where it will become delicious chocolate. |
| Recycled Paper and Crafts Entrepreneurship | 11 women have become members of a cooperatively owned business.<br><br>4 artisans have found a workshop for their labor and a market for their products.<br><br>5,651 sheets of paper produced.          | Travelers hands-on support helps all aspects of this company grow, increasing both production and sales. As a result, the employees report greater overall well-being. The program also provides this women's cooperative a safe and secure location where they can grow their business.  |

<sup>6</sup> Much of the Chocal impact activity is staged due to hygiene laws of producing consumable products for the market. In Table 1, the statistics on the amount of chocolate produced appear to suggest that volunteer tourists were directly responsible for the end product. This is misleading, as by law, chocolate must be produced under sterile, controlled conditions.

|   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| Concrete Floors in Community Home   | <p>Concrete floors have been installed in 24 homes.</p> <p>These floors provide safer homes and improve the quality of life for 137 people, the total number of people living in these homes.</p>  |   |
| Water Filter Production   | <p>436 water filters produced.</p> <p>This will provide clean water access to 436 homes</p>  | <p>Inhabitants will experience a significant reduction in instances of waterborne illnesses, as well as costs savings from not having to purchase expensive bottled water. Indirect benefits will include better work and school attendance</p> |
| <p>Community English Conversation &amp; Learning</p> <p>Student English Conversation &amp; Learning</p> <p>Creative Arts, Music &amp; Sports (CAMS)</p> | <p>English proficiency is one of the most important drivers of employment success in the economy of the Dominican Republic. In these three sailings, 728 people, including students and community members, have benefitted from effective foreign language interaction with native English speakers.</p> <p>Each person has now received approximately 17.5 hours of direct interaction and instruction from an English speaker, which signifies 7.3% of the number of hours recommended by international bodies to achieve elementary proficiency in English.</p> |   |

Table 1



In Table 1, the cruise line presents metrics as validation to indicate that impact activities are achieving significant positive change for those Dominican's directly involved in the project. However, this breakdown is not anchored in theoretical understandings of volunteerism, international development or even project management principles, nor does it verify 'success' in its outcomes. Instead, the language is couched in the language of marketing, as the cruise line promotes the idea that volunteer tourists make a positive impact through these projects. The missing piece of this narrative as presented above is a significant understanding of the construction and reproduction of norms through the performance of volunteer tourism from the groups involved in the performance. Simply counting the number of water filters produced gives an indication of how many tickets Carnival sold for Fathom. However, this metric does not reveal challenges faced by citizens for municipal service provision of water. Further, these numbers do not demonstrate how tourists view Dominican citizens, or if their presence forms a hierarchy in which the tourist sits on top. These indicators merely validate that a group of people produced some *things*, without indication of conditions or context, both physical and political, in which they were produced.

The Puerto Plata region experiences visible poverty. Large, well-kept homes surrounded by high concrete walls and barbed wire sit adjacent to vacant lots littered with garbage, and tarp dwellings. The country's income distribution problem is largely hidden from the tourists that remain within the gated walls of their resorts or Amber Cove. Generally speaking, people living in tarp communities are not working in the enclaves. Employees of the enclaves, themselves largely hidden, are required to adhere to a minimum standard of cleanliness and friendliness in order to maintain tourist comfort, both literally and psychologically. Both cruise respondents and partnership respondents

expressed caution when discussing the intersection of tourists and locals. They suggested that volunteers are not prepared for the shock of poverty; therefore tourists must be monitored and minded at all times. According to one cruise line representative, “People inherently want to help, but they don’t know how, we give them the opportunities. Volunteers aren’t really prepared for the shock of poverty. People also come in contact with those they otherwise would not have the opportunity to meet. Head into neighbourhoods they normally wouldn’t.” (CL-1, Personal Communication, September 18, 2016). An IDDI respondent suggested, “This thing [Fathom] is trying to change the way people travel. People aren’t really ready to confront what they see here [poverty]. We are trying to empower both groups [tourists & locals], but it can be a bit of culture shock.” (NGO-1, Personal Communication, July 16, 2016). To organizers, taking tourists outside the enclave was part of the selling point or experience; however, care must be taken to ensure the right type of experience, which means nothing that would allow the tourist to question their role in the project or the larger global structure. Of note, several tourists began to recognize the visible poverty that exists in tandem with the middle class in local communities outside Amber Cove. These tourists were shocked by the visibility of the poverty, not by the existence of poverty, as the Fathom premise is predicated on poverty. When probed, tourists suggested that the extreme poverty in the landscape did not match the modest poverty of the marketing material. Tourists did not confront the inequitable distribution of wealth left from the Dominican Republic’s place in the global economy. For the tourists, modest poverty allows for altruistic feelings from helping, whereas extreme poverty caused discomfort for vacationing.

Fathom is a subsidiary of a cruise line whose core business is providing leisure vacations at value prices (Marketline Advantage, 2016, p. 5). Any benefit accrued by

Dominicans from Fathom's projects is secondary to Fathom's objective of profit maximization. Replacing the professionalization of development practices is the marketization of volunteerism, in which development work is monetized. In this way Fathom adheres to the market society standard. When probed, cruise representatives were either ignorant or deliberately obtuse about the cruise line's role in these processes and the linkages among underdevelopment, economic leakage and profit seeking. One cruise line representative said, "This is the industry we are in [cruise industry]. We cannot change the way we work because we wouldn't be competitive. What we can do is try to make a difference in people's lives by bringing volunteers to them. That's what the impact activities are about." (CL-1, Personal Communication, September 18, 2016). As a large TNC and the world's largest cruise provider, Carnival's expertise is in making profit from cruise travel. This is Fathom's actual objective. In this way, Fathom tourists become agents of profit, both through the consumption of all of Carnival's offerings, but also by ignoring the contradictions inherent in the project. Indeed, all Fathom passengers that engaged with the researcher felt that the negative effects from taking a cruise were outweighed by participating in Fathom impact activities. The consensus among participants was that cruise lines are going to travel regardless, therefore Fathom can offset some of that damage through social interventions. An Entrena respondent suggested that, "The motivation [by Carnival] for this [Fathom] stems from the Dominican Republic, not changing the cruise industry." (NGO-4, Personal Communication, October July 16, 2016). At no time in the researcher's presence did tourists discuss labour or environmental practices on board the ship.

In terms of participation in impact activities, project developers had to ensure that the activities were suitable for all ages and abilities. In this way, activities are not

difficult, but bring a sense of satisfaction to consumers. Indeed, as part of a larger conversation regarding the role of for-profit corporations doing development work, respondents were asked about the appropriateness of having vacationers, people by definition that are looking for leisure, do development work. Tourists as paying customers must leave satisfied with their experience. This is completely extraneous to the impact or context of the work. Indeed, for tourists, the feeling of helping the underprivileged is what mattered most. According to one project manager, “We are not selling poverty. There are opportunities in this country for volunteers to make a difference in the lives of real people. The government can’t afford to do everything for everyone.” (NGO-1, Personal Communication, October July 16, 2016). Tourists were aware, though not concerned that machines could exponentially increase the production of paper or that the activity was largely staged, as in the case of Chocal. By appealing to the natural inclination of good people, organizers have managed to sell ‘helping’ by giving opportunities to do it, at a price. A project manager suggested that projects were chosen based on their appeal to tourists, “We wanted projects that would introduce volunteers to the Dominican Republic they wouldn’t see from the ship or an all-inclusive [resort]. We drive them to neighbourhoods, they meet people. The activities aren’t difficult, they are satisfying; volunteers leave feeling like they made a difference, that’s important.” (NGO-4, Personal Communication, July 11, 2016). This was described as ‘empowering’ by Fathom tourists and reinforces their colonial understanding of the Dominican Republic.

Of the eight impact activities in which tourists participated, the production of water filters generated the most political feedback during informal observation. One tourist questioned the lack of availability of individual water filters for use in Flint Michigan (in response to the water crisis taking place there): “Why can’t we do this water

thing in Michigan? Then we won't have to pay for it [through federal taxes]. This is a really easy solution to that problem.” (VT-3, Personal Communication, October 26, 2016). Another suggested that school children could make these filters in order to establish a wider distribution system. When probed, a respondent suggested that the Dominican Republic government was incapable of providing water service to citizens: “This government (Dominican Republic) is corrupt! Just look how people live here: animals in the streets, garbage everywhere, why doesn't the government do something about this?” (VT-6, Personal Communication, October 28, 2016). Another stated, “Obviously the government can't do anything about this [living conditions]. Look how poor everyone is. That's why we [Fathom tourists] are so necessary, we can actually do something for them. It's up to us to help the poor.” (VT-1, Personal Communication, October 28, 2016). However, respondents failed to recognize the disconnect between government water provision and individual water provision. Fathom offers a market-driven model for water provision. The project places responsibility for clean water – a human right – onto citizens. For many wealthier countries, however, clean water provision is a state responsibility and is funded through taxation. In Flint, years of erosion of the tax base after corporate interests moved their operations out of the area, has left the state unable to fulfill its commitment to citizens with clean water. This does not suggest that market solutions are a better alternative to state interventions. In fact, the Flint example illustrates why market solutions fail: the market has not intervened because there is no profit present. For Fathom tourists, there are two underlying elements at work. First, TNCs providing water is normalized. For example, bottled water is a market-driven attempt at water provision. The US alone purchased over 50 billion bottles of water in 2016 (Chow, 2017). Second, tourists do not recognize their elevated place in the global

structural hierarchy. For Western tourists, having citizens in developing states filter water through a small clay pot is perceived to be ‘good enough’ for an unsophisticated society. Interestingly, tourists argued that they were helping Dominicans to access clean water, but would not consider the alternative of supporting local political engagement. Arguably, political pressure on the state to provide water infrastructure could have long-term positive outcomes for citizens. For tourists, engaging the state was not an efficient solution to this problem, and they felt the state is corrupt and therefore incapable of water provision, though no evidence of that was put forward.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

In the case of Fathom and in many volunteer tourism initiatives, profit maximization is prioritized. Theoretically, this is the fundamental goal of all corporations under capitalism. Pragmatically, however, this plays out in two important ways to the detriment of local populations. First, economic leakage from tourism reduces the amount of national income collected by the Dominican Republic government (Fawcett, 2016, p. 19), straining its ability to offer social programming. Second, citizens in the Dominican Republic are increasingly precariously employed. When asked about the profit principle vis-a-vis development work, overwhelmingly, project managers replied with the same answer. According to all informants, there must be profit to be sustainable. For proponents of market-driven development, the profit motive is essential for the success of the project and acts as an incentive to motivate entrepreneurs to perform work that would otherwise be neglected. Nevertheless, using profit to spur delivery of social outcomes, leaves recipients and the larger society in a precarious position, as the entrepreneurs will chase those projects with the largest financial return on investment. Many social

outcomes, such as clean water, literacy and access to reliable healthcare, should be treated as human rights, and given priority over private financial gain. Instead, vulnerable populations must rely on unstable market conditions and tourism trends for their human rights, not those responsible for ensuring the public good. Commonly, representatives expressed the importance of private interests as the drivers of development for impoverished areas, a tenet of the larger global capitalist structure that governs market economies. However, the fact that cruise representatives, partner organization personnel and volunteers referred to this point relentlessly was interesting. Rather than allowing for the fact that the corporate search for profit created uneven wealth distribution, and therefore created the need for social interventions, respondents continued to insist that profit accumulation was the only reliable method to ensure projects were sustainable in the long term. In fact, the respondents positioned themselves as more efficient problem solvers over state officials in terms of water provision, reforestation and educational initiatives. Respondents from all groups - cruise representatives, partner organization representatives and tourists - rationalized that the Dominican Republican government was too corrupt to manage projects in these areas and that NGOs could not sustain their own existence because they did not make a profit. According to a partner organization representative, for-profit business is better than NGOs. International NGOs are large and cumbersome, and continue development work only because funding to the organization renews, not because the development projects work or have positive outcomes. They then questioned the outcomes once aid runs out, suggesting that projects funded in this way are precarious. However, the same logic can be applied to projects run through profit-generating corporations; that is, once projects are no longer profitable, there is no more incentive to continue with the project. Indeed, all focus was on current contexts; no focus

was placed on historical context. Participants implied that the Dominican Republic is responsible for its own conditions of poverty.

Carnival identified a gap in the market which volunteer tourism could fill, creating the marketization of volunteerism. Employees as profit agents for corporations, become technocrats, not of development programs, but of profit frontiers. Cultural and historical context remains discounted, as volunteer tourism projects mimic Western ideals of progress. This is not to suggest that communities embracing volunteer tourism are entirely distinct from these ideas of progress. Instead, volunteer tourism discounts local self-determination through exclusion at the conception stage. Though the Fathom project partnered with local partners in the Dominican Republic, the conception of volunteer tourism as a venture was borne in the Carnival head-office boardroom. Volunteer tourism *exists* as a Western project. Institutionalization of norms and values are codified as corporate missions and visions. In the case of Fathom, “Travel with purpose. Travel that transforms lives. Sometimes including your own. Impact travel with Fathom provides the opportunity to build community with like-minded travelers, become immersed in another culture, and work alongside its people to create enduring social impact (fathom.org, 2016).” This corporate mission reveals that Fathom exists for the traveler and appeals to traveler desires. It does not allow for tourists to think critically about the desires of people within the Dominican Republic.

Fathom constructs the Dominican Republic as in need of white saviors because of poverty. They do this through their social media, their website and promotional materials found at travel agencies. Beginning when tourists first encounter Fathom marketing material, the Dominican Republic is classified as underdeveloped, impoverished and technologically inferior by presenting photos that illustrate a pristine and modestly



impoverished landscape. Materials are presented without critically examining the historical and political context that allowed for the economic and social conditions the country experiences today. Once tourists engage with the cruise vacation, they are remade as problem-solvers, present in the Dominican Republic to ‘help’ with social programming. As Fathom tourists, the delineation between tourist and host is reinforced in one subtle but fundamental manner: tourists, though exposed to local communities, are still housed in the gated confines of Amber Cove. They are physically separated from local environments. This further emphasizes their role as *institutional* agents. Tourist knowledge taught as truth by Fathom through marketing material, onboard activities and through impact activities, which then becomes part of Fathom operations and thus institutionalized. Amber Cove and the *Adonia* offer tourists everything they need in abundance, including leisure. They are wealthy environments, which engender safety and emotional wellbeing. Coupled with the reinforcement from the cruise line’s discourse on the Dominican Republic’s realities, tourists take on the moral authority to shape and change the Dominican Republic into something that reflects their reality. Fathom, then, become the vehicle through which the tourists create the organizational hierarchy within and through which they act, under the guise of efficiency. This process contributes to a never-ending cycle in which the Dominican Republic remains subject to volunteer tourism endeavors.

Fathom operates on the belief that the Dominican Republic is underdeveloped and in need of intervention. As a concept, the volunteer aspect of this type of holiday, takes for granted that the Dominican Republic is in need of intervention in specific program areas, allowing Fathom to exploit the groundwork already laid by development agencies. Fathom is not designed to foster critical thinking about *why* the Dominican Republic is

underdeveloped. Fathom's marketing material highlights Dominican Republic poverty by constructing a discourse on need that stems, not from the country's history of colonialism, but from the country itself. For participants on these cruises, the marketing material normalizes the confirmation bias they already hold on the classification of the Dominican Republic as problematic, without allowing for a broader impression of life for Dominican citizens. Whether Dominican citizens view their country as underdeveloped is incidental to the Fathom project.

## **Chapter 5: Volunteer Tourism as a Profit Frontier: Discussion from the Findings**

In January, 2019, Oxfam International released a report on the global economy, “Public Wealth or Private Good?”. The report presents a damning picture of poverty across the globe as the gap between the rich and poor widens exponentially. For those with wealth, the past ten years have been very good, financially speaking. In 2018, twenty-six people owned the same amount of wealth as the 3.8 billion poorest people, globally (Oxfam, 2019, p. 10). Indeed, the report indicates that wealth for those twenty-six people increased by \$900b USD in the last year alone, or \$2.5b USD daily (p. 10). During that same period, the wealth of the 3.8 billion people fell by 11%. However, Oxfam suggests that this excessive inequality is not inevitable nor natural. According to the report, “there is no law of economics that says the richest should grow ever richer while people in poverty die for lack of medicine... Inequality is a political and a policy choice” (p. 17). Indeed, Oxfam suggests that public delivery of social services will combat this inequality and they have the greatest impact on the reduction of poverty. By providing public services, governments allow for economies of scale and allow citizens to retain more of their income. Further, speaking directly to citizen-democratic control over their own societies, public services can be accountable and responsive to citizens and community needs.

The wealthiest citizens and corporations recognize the problems that vast wealth accumulation causes among the poorest people, through environmental pollution, mass poverty and poor health indicators. To alleviate the problems of wealth concentration, many of the wealthy, both people and corporations, utilize philanthropy to sanitize their profit-seeking and to distract from the inequality they create. In this way, the wealthy

maintain their privileged status, without drawing attention to the structural system that maintains that status. Philanthropists focus on the acute problem at hand, such as illiteracy or infrastructure renewal, while giving the impression that those problems can be solved through philanthropy. This allows citizens to perceive billionaires or billionaire TNCs to be generous caregivers, but distracts from the actual problem, which is that democratically, governments should be publicly funding the sorts of institutions in which the wealthy people and corporations look to support. Further, it distracts citizens from questioning the system that allows obscene amounts of wealth and resources to lie in the hands of the few, while the supports of life for the global population remain under their control.

This thesis has introduced the idea of volunteer tourism using Fathom travel as a case study. Despite claims made by the stakeholders of the Fathom project, volunteer tourism does not correct gaps or structural inequalities of a social or environmental nature. Indeed, Fathom does little to address large-scale problems, such as lack of infrastructure or illiteracy, but instead offers a piecemeal approach to overcoming a lack of government intervention, such as producing personal water filters, or providing short term language training. Further, the project infantilizes Dominican citizens, reinforcing tourists' views that people in developing countries are less technologically advanced, unable or unwilling to 'fix' societal problems themselves and that international market-solutions are the only solution to 'help' the Dominican Republic. The Fathom project is in its infancy, therefore evidence of long-term impacts, positive or negative, to the country is not yet available. However, this thesis highlights the risks to societies that

promote corporate interventions that delegitimize the role of the state, leaving citizens vulnerable to the whims of TNCs.

The post-war development agenda has not resulted in a great equalizing modernization among populations across the globe. However, a shift toward economic neoliberalism has altered developing economies and championed a free-market ethos that prioritizes foreign direct investment, free trade and lax market regulations. The effect of this shift has resulted in uneven wealth distribution that has left vulnerable populations grappling with poverty at the global level, and within states. Neoliberalism, of course, did not alter the development agenda, but rather introduced former colonial states as failures of enterprise that could be fetishized by an interested philanthropist or philanthro-corporate entity. One of the new approaches to development that has emerged, market-driven development, allows for-profit entities to design consumer products with the Western, 'enlightened' consumer in mind, usually under the guise of environmental sustainability or social conscience. Volunteer tourism emerged as one such market-driven development initiative. These products aligned with corporate branding and involved profit taking as the measure of success.

Volunteer tourism has been subjected to much academic debate since Wearing's (2001) work on combining leisure with development work. The debates on good practice versus bad practice focus primarily on individual project design and implementation, while independent choices and actions are heavily discussed as they relate to tourists. Critiques surrounding neoliberalism and the neo-colonial nature of volunteer tourism as well as the commodification of poverty have moved centre stage in academic research within the past ten years (Coren and Gray, 2012; Frenzel and Koen, 2012; Taplin, Dredge

and Scherrer, 2014). In terms of tourism, advocates describe volunteer tourism as “helping yourself while helping others” (Tomazos and Cooper, 2012, p. 3). Similarly, supporters suggest that, for those developing states that are unable to offer social programming, volunteer tourism is better than no social programming at all.

However, volunteer tourism is not a benign practice. Insidiously, market-driven development fails to challenge inequalities in the global geopolitical and economic landscape, and hides behind a façade of moral values that, in reality, reinforce neoliberal capitalism and its imperatives: capital accumulation and profit maximization. Volunteer tourism, on the other hand, deceives advocates by pretending to be something other than a profit-seeking venture. Volunteer tourism does not eliminate nor offer long-term relief from inequality and poverty; instead, volunteer tourism works *within* the capitalist system to bring modest reprieve from failures within that system, never interrogating whether the system itself is faulty. Volunteer tourism should not be thought of along a spectrum of good versus bad, with an eye toward improving practice. Rather, volunteer tourism should not be conducted at all because volunteer tourism does not offer sustainable, long-term relief from inequality.

The gap between profit and the provision of social welfare has widened significantly since the dismantling of social safety-net built by post-colonial or independent states, if they existed at all. These promoted social programs and state regulation to foster financial and social equity among populations. The end of global colonialism, the fight for and realization of self-government for many former colonies, as well as advances in technology, have led to intense societal changes, which have created inequality for global populations. Billionaires and TNCs corporations excel in the current

economic climate, and have accumulated capital at an exponential rate. The lure of markets as problem solvers is seductive, especially to those that have previously harnessed market power to their advantage.

A market society cannot continue to commodify the complex needs of humans and the environment. Treating them as mere commodities creates some dangerous pressures, borne out through catastrophic climate change and mass poverty. Financial wealth, though a material reality, is a social construct and wealth inequality is not a natural by-product of humanity, but a conscious choice of a few actors who maintain power and privilege. While there are small benefits of commodification for some populations, they are not worth the inequality and negative externalities produced by the market system. Human existence is not and should not be predicated on market values; hence, humanity must work towards valuing life and nature that is outside the market system.

Volunteer tourists and tourism providers adhere to a discourse that seeks to marginalize and re-invent the local population. This discourse is built into marketing campaigns and used to attract potential volunteer tourists. Racist and paternalistic tropes of developing states are featured, in which smiling women, children and the elderly are presented as ‘happy but poor’, living in situations in need of Western interventions. Before potential tourists even leave for developing states, they have begun to conceptualize those states as an inferior reflection of the West.

Fathom is essentially using private wealth to achieve some public good: while some small problems are addressed, such as water filtration at the household level for a small population, larger issues of economic leakage from port rents or environmental

devastation from cruise ships go unaddressed. These small projects distract from the larger, underlying problem, such as the obscene concentration of wealth described above. While Carnival is the largest cruise provider in the world with over half of the market share, they distract from their position on top of the capitalist hierarchy by providing some social programs. Fathom projects are small gestures to acknowledge that the Dominican Republic requires social programming. They perpetuate the myth that markets are the most efficient methods of resource allocation. Underlying these myths, however, is the privilege that Carnival holds within the capitalist system. While it is unsurprising that those within the capitalist system seek to hold onto their privilege, pushback is needed against the idea that development and life-supporting systems are market goods.

Fathom tourists are presented with images and text that explicitly frame Dominican citizens as inferior, impoverished, savage and pure, untainted by the complications of modern life. Fathom projects take place in impoverished communities and tourists are housed separately, away from locals. This leads to confirmation bias for tourists, by reinforcing the Fathom narrative of the Dominican Republic. Fathom tourists are complicit in the white saviour complex and view locals as uncivilized. In order to thrive, Fathom must first create a language and program around a 'helping' narrative, by setting up the Dominican as a place that needs help. They must also establish that volunteers have the moral authority to impose their views of economic sustainability, as agents of a market society, upon the local population. Fathom must also empower volunteers to perform interventionist programs without questioning the roles of stakeholders. The water filtration process is a good example of this: volunteers disregarded the role of the state in community water provision. Instead, they accepted that



individual responsibility for water in the Dominican Republic is the norm. Volunteer tourists do not interrogate whether a program is needed, is welcomed, or is the best ‘fit’ for the local context. Generally speaking, this takes place by depoliticizing programs through a discourse that suggests the state is failing, corrupt, inept, or simply not as efficient in delivering programs as the initiative. By totally disregarding the role of the state, Fathom volunteers appear to remove the politics from their actions. In fact, they are simply adhering to politics, by deciding what is normal and removing the democratic rights of self-determination of locals.

A nuanced examination of Fathom’s operations in the Dominican Republic has revealed that the project provides some benefits in-country for a small number of people. Carnival partnered with two organizations in the Dominican Republic to oversee operations, choose projects and maximize tourists’ time in country. While many international volunteer tourism outfits make the mistake of starting projects without in-country partners, Carnival, through Fathom, does attempt inclusion of local stakeholders. By doing this, the partner organizations were able to design projects in which they can extract maximum utility from tourist labour.

The literature suggests that short-term development projects conducted by volunteer tourists are not viable long-term. One reason for this is the lack of understanding by tourists of local contexts (Jakubiak and Iordache-Bryant, 2017, p. 212). However, this need not be the case if locals utilize foreign labour to achieve project outcomes through local, organizational commitment and good management practices. Projects that build timelines to include the leadership transfer to locals or to incoming volunteers, may have higher success rates than those that do not. Further, local

engagement plans must be built into the project plan, otherwise projects fail – even those implemented by well-informed volunteers. However, this research revealed that pragmatic volunteer tourism projects are advantageous to those directly involved, if project design takes these arguments into account.

In the case of this research, local contexts underpin the project because project designers and managers work for Dominican organizations. Rather than engaging external actors to design and oversee project details, Fathom partner organizations are embedded in the local context with historical and experiential knowledge of Dominican society. Because of this, projects are *conceptualized* locally, adhering to and contributing to contexts in situ. This does not assume that local projects are inherently more successful than foreign-run projects. However, excluding locals entirely from project operations promotes colonial attitudes about locals. Ultimately though, focusing on local participation masks the uneven power differentials present in the fathom project; that is, Carnival has the power to allow for projects or not, due to their financial clout, regardless of local participation.

The research also found that projects could be considered “long-term” despite tourists’ exceedingly restricted time in country. Fathom had the capacity to host 865 tourists per impact activity per year, based on available berths and sailing schedule. While volunteer tourists only had, at most one, 8-hour day in which to participate in an impact activity project, project managers ensured that this itinerant-style labour could be used to the project’s advantage. Setting aside those projects that had an element of staging associated with them, projects were sustained through an assembly line style of production. For example, the cement floors project utilized the large numbers of volunteers as manual labour to lift and pour concrete flooring. One group of volunteer

tourists formed a line and distributed heavy buckets of wet concrete from the street into the house, while others shoveled the concrete into place. The RePapel recycling collective, utilized volunteers in the same way, as did the water filter ceramics workshop personnel and the fruit tree nursery organizers. In keeping project tasks non-specific, and maintaining the same Dominican representatives to lead a succession of changing volunteer tourists, the project could carry on, regardless of whether the manual labour was switched out weekly with new recruits. Project planners regarded this as a key component of project design in making the most of hundreds of cruise volunteer tourists that changed weekly. Fathom projects should not be misunderstood as denying employment opportunities for locals. These projects do not provide paid positions and such positions would not be filled as such if Fathom stopped supporting projects through volunteer labour.

Critics of volunteer tourism also identify volunteer tourists' lack of relevant skills as a key shortcoming of volunteer tourism as development work. Poorly completed projects due to volunteer tourists' lack of skill, in terms of constructing buildings, for example, can place both financial and time constraints on locals, who must repair poor craftsmanship or risk endangering local community members (Guttentag, 2009, p. 543). However, Dominican project planners anticipate the limited skills of volunteers and correct for such. The Loma de Isabel fruit tree nursery project was designed specifically for low-skilled participation. Dominican partner representatives demonstrate simple tasks to volunteer tourists, who manage, despite their lack of expertise, to successfully participate in the project. The situation is similar at the Chocal cacao workshop, where volunteers learn the simple task of sorting through cacao beans in order to process chocolate for consumption.

The literature suggests that a large number of volunteers in a community create disincentives for training local workers (Daldeniz & Hampton, 2010, p. 31). Yet, this research showed that, to the contrary, the number of volunteer tourists was key to the success of projects, as project design allowed for the labour of many low-skilled volunteer tourists. It may appear that volunteer tourists are taking the work of Dominicans, yet, this assumes that Dominicans have to do unskilled manual labour. On the contrary, because volunteers performed unskilled work, the Chocal collective of women, for example, were free to concentrate on building business management skills, such as human resource management, accounting and inventory control and marketing to an international market. IDDI encourages the collective to treat volunteer tourists as a large unpaid staff in order to develop these skills.

According to Dominican project managers employed by partner organizations, the goal of Fathom impact activities work itself is to teach the women's collectives (Chocal Cacao Factory site, RePapel paper recycling site) important lessons about business development in real-time. This experiential learning is driven by IDDI through the project, allowing for the volunteer tourists to act as a live case study on which to practice. That volunteer tourists achieve some form of altruistic high from the project is secondary. IDDI is primarily a business development organization and the respondents from this partner organization are realistic about their impacts and their organizational mission: to train locals to compete in the market. This differs from Fathom marketing, which suggests that international volunteers were filling an important societal gap left by the lack of funding for social programs by the state, such as improving literacy rates or providing access to clean drinking water. These business management activities are pragmatic and in line with similar entrepreneur training initiatives in developed states.

Fathom claims to be a travel experience that delivers the best of both worlds - a true vacation and an opportunity to give back (“Global Impact”, 2018). Through artful marketing, Fathom claims to be a unique experience that gets ‘closer’ to authentic experiences, allowing participants to gain a deeper understanding of shared global challenges (“Global Impact”, 2018). Interestingly, Fathom does not explicitly reveal the nature of those shared challenges. Certainly, Fathom does not encourage tourists to examine their own culpability in spreading racist ideas about developing states. Nor does Fathom address the deep irony of a cruise line suggesting that its passengers think deeper about its role in those challenges. In terms of authenticity, for Fathom, ‘authentic’ appears to be synonymous with moderately impoverished. Fathom marketing does not accurately reflect the complicated economic nature of the Dominican Republic as a middle-income country in a globalized economy. That would require thinking through the wealth gap and to understand historical legacies of violence and trade. Fathom does not offer authentic experiences or foster introspection; to do so would be to discourage both volunteer tourism and cruise tourism. Consequently, Fathom offers a product that mimics both in order to continue profit maximization. Ultimately, the capricious nature of cruise tourism makes Fathom a risky venture for Carnival and for the partner organizations, IDDI and Entrena. Cruise tourists seek comfort, not manual labour, as a holiday break. While it is true that some tourists may be interested in Fathom for altruistic reasons, that cruise tourism is highly exploitative of the environment and labour cannot be reconciled for those consumers that are looking to make changes to global structures and inequality. Indeed, that some activities are at least partially staged suggests that Carnival is merely providing tourists with leisure activities, not activities that are changing some aspect of the Dominican Republic. Consumers may become cynical and reject Fathom as a

legitimate offering. Evidence of low sales bears this out. Though Fathom has the capacity for 704 passengers, at the time of research, the ship was host to roughly 200. Fathom has changed its offering to further promote cultural exchange, meeting local people, trips to museums and art galleries, cooking classes etc., to satisfy its current consumer base. Manual labour impact activities, though still available are not highlighted. Since the launch of Fathom, Carnival has sold the Adonia and moved operations across Princess Cruises, a subsidiary of Carnival, to operate like an excursion. This will capture greater market share without the overhead cost. This enables them to capture a larger profit margin without employing labour and services, revealing the true motive behind the Fathom project.

This thesis demonstrates that Carnival's pivot from leisure tourism to volunteer tourism was driven profit seeking. Through an analysis of Fathom marketing material and interviews, Carnival was selling modest community engagement under the guise of development in order to create a new pathway to profit. Significant change was nebulous in the Dominican Republic from the Fathom project. However, tourists' attitudes towards Dominican citizens revealed that they held colonial understanding of the Dominican Republic as a developing state, holding Dominican's responsible for their current economic and social state without regard to the complicated historical legacy left by slavery and colonialism. Ultimately, the limited gains experienced by a small number of Dominican citizens do not warrant the use of volunteer tourism as a development mechanism. While a number of citizens with direct involvement do receive modest gains from participation in the project, overall, the amount of economic leakage through profit syphoning by Carnival result in a net loss for the Dominican Republic. Modest success in

the Fathom project reveal that local partners on the ground in the Dominican harness the good intentions of tourists in order to advance local objectives. Yet, this a long way from creating the type of change that would significantly raise citizens out of poverty, foster large-scale infrastructure renewal or eliminate illiteracy long-term. Indeed, the dwindling number of interested tourists demonstrates the limited success that Fathom has long-term and reveals the shortcoming of market-driven development initiatives.

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