

TRACING TOURISM TRANSLATIONS:

**Opening the black box of development assistance in
community-based tourism in Viet Nam**

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Glossary of abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CBT	Community-based tourism
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DPC	District People's Committee
FFI	Flora and Fauna International
GSO	Vietnamese General Statistics Office
GTZ	German Development Cooperation
HOU	Hanoi Open University
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
ITDR	Institute of Tourism Development and Research
IUCN	World Conservation Union
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
PPC	Provincial People's Committee
PPT	Pro-poor tourism
SNV	Netherlands Development Agency
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
VCBTN	Viet Nam Community-based Tourism Network
VNAT	Vietnam National Administration of Tourism
VND	Vietnamese Dong (currency)
VNFU	Vietnam National Farmers Union
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Abstract

TRACING TOURISM TRANSLATIONS: Opening the black box of development assistance in community-based tourism in Viet Nam

Tourism is a lens that provides unique insights into the social, cultural, political and economic processes operating in specific environments. In this study, the lens is directed at community-based tourism initiatives in northern Viet Nam that have been ‘facilitated’ by international development agencies. The potential of tourism as a tool for development is gaining increased recognition and popularity around the globe, despite widespread criticism in the academic literature based on the poor record of success. In Viet Nam, community-based tourism initiatives are increasingly being established with assistance from international development agencies, as a means of diversifying agricultural livelihoods in the hope of alleviating poverty. Based on six weeks of ethnographic fieldwork in northern Viet Nam, this research joins only a handful of tourism studies that have used actor-network theory (ANT) as a methodological approach for studying tourism. This thesis therefore provides an important contribution to the emerging dialogue on the potential of ANT to inform new understandings about tourism, as well as opening the black box of development-assisted community-based tourism in Viet Nam.

This research uses Callon’s (1986b) phases of translation to identify the actors in community-based tourism in Viet Nam, exploring the roles, relationships and strategies (per)formed by these actors as they attempt to enact CBT actor-networks. A discourse analysis shows how dominant discourses around knowledge and power homogenize groups such as host communities and tour operators, in ways that legitimise the interventions and actions of other actors, such as development agencies and government institutions. Exploring the dominant discourses around CBT opens a window into spaces within the actor-network of CBT where the workings of the actor-network are prescribed, taken for granted, and thus appear stable. However there are also spaces where the actor-networks are constantly negotiated, where meaning is contested and relationships between actors are fluid and dynamic. Out of these negotiated spaces agency emerges, and actor-networks are

reconfigured as power relations shift and actors are transformed. This thesis explores some of these prescribed and negotiated spaces, showing the impact of specific power relations on material CBT outcomes and providing new understandings to inform development policy and practice.

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Chapter 1

Tourism and Development in Viet Nam – Setting the Scene

“Vietnam is one of the in places in Asia thanks to its vibrant yet traditional cities, unashamedly idyllic coastline, incredible scenery, pulsating history and culture, and potpourri of people. Vietnam has everything, but it’s also raw in places, so pack some flexibility, humour and patience. Come expecting the unexpected, be ready for an adventure as much as a holiday, and Vietnam will deliver” (Lonely Planet guide to Vietnam, 2005¹).

“The power to do good is also the power to do harm...what one man regards as good, another may regard as harm” (Friedman, 1962 in Fisher, 1997, p. 442).

Introduction

The potential of tourism as a tool for development is gaining increased recognition around the globe and in so-called ‘third world’ countries, development organisations are often involved in facilitating tourism initiatives (Butcher, 2007; Munt, 1994; Pluss, 2003; Sharpley, 2009; Stevens, 2010; van der Duim & Caalders, 2008). Although there is a large body of literature relating to the role of development agencies in aid and development practice in general (Bebbington 2004; and see for example Crewe & Harrison, 1998; Eade & Ligteringen, 2001; Edwards & Hulme, 1996a; Fisher, 1997; Rugendyke, 2007), the role that development agencies and donors play in the development of tourism initiatives is poorly documented (Hawkins & Mann 2007; Lindberg et al., 2001).

This thesis explores the actor-network of development-assisted community-based tourism (CBT) in north-western Viet Nam. South-east Asian countries provide a fascinating context for studying tourism. Governmental support for neoliberal policies that promote tourism for economic growth often clash with neopopulist and postmodern paradigms, that

¹ Ray & Yanigihara (2005)

encourage tourism for development of the community rather than for development of the tourism industry (Scheyvens, 2002). In Viet Nam specifically, the competing ideologies of the state's market-based socialism and external agents (particularly donors) with neoliberal policies place tourism within a complex political sphere. Operating within these competing paradigms and political ideologies are development agencies, and thus a study of their role in CBT in Viet Nam must acknowledge how discourses and practices are embedded in relations of power (Mowforth & Munt 2003; Wearing & McDonald, 2002). In tracing the processes through which key actors interact with other actors in (per)forming CBT actor-networks, we can gain insight into the power relations at play in CBT and the various challenges for achieving the goals of development-assisted CBT initiatives. It is hoped that these new understandings can inform policy and practice of development agencies working in CBT, as well as contribute to the ongoing dialogue about the methodological use of ANT in tourism.

This chapter is about setting the scene – exploring the theoretical and practical contexts within which this research is situated. The chapter contains two sections. The first considers the linkages and trends in the scholarship addressing tourism and development, and situates community-based tourism within these bodies of literature. The second section then introduces Viet Nam, providing some contextual and historical background on geographical, cultural and political matters. The section considers the trajectory of tourism growth in Viet Nam, and the level of involvement of international development agencies in tourism to date. The chapter concludes with a small introduction to the Sa Pa district, a location that has received much attention from development agencies in the tourism field and within which several case studies are situated.

Theoretical and methodological directions

This thesis is set within several overlapping and complementary theoretical trajectories. The key methodological approach is actor-network theory (ANT). ANT approaches the question of “how order is accomplished and made stable in time and space” and is a practice-based perspective aimed at “tracing the practices through which society is assembled” (Johannesson & Baerenholdt, 2009, p. 15). It is grounded in material relationalism expressed through the principle of ‘symmetry,’ which requires researchers to

“refute all pre-given distinctions between classes of possible actors (natural/social, local/global, and economic/cultural) and treat these categories as symmetrical effects of relational practices” (*ibid.*). ANT has only recently been used in tourism studies by a handful of scholars, but their work indicates that there is great potential in ANT to understand and be comfortable with the complex and shifting relationships that assemble to create tourism activities. This thesis expands on this work².

In researching and writing about CBT in Viet Nam, this research draws primarily on interview material and participant observation gathered during six weeks of field research in north-western Viet Nam, where a number of development agency-assisted CBT projects are established or in the planning stages. Secondary data sources were also utilised, in the form of CBT project documents, tourism promotional material, websites, and English language newspapers published in Viet Nam. ANT influenced how this material was obtained, as well as the subsequent analysis. This thesis uses ANT to facilitate the description of how CBT functions in Viet Nam, then moves on to show how an ANT approach can highlight the political processes of negotiation, representation, mobilisation and displacement among actors, entities and places (van der Duim, 2007) that essentially controls CBT outcomes. Drawing on insights from Foucault’s governmentality and power/knowledge frameworks, postcolonialism and postdevelopment theories, and Pinch’s concept of knowledge communities (1998; 2009) this research traverses bodies of literature not commonly used together to gain new understandings of the power relations inherent in CBT. The research also makes an important contribution to a small collection of critical studies on tourism in Viet Nam.

Linking Tourism and Development

Tourism as an academic field did not really exist until the advent of ‘contemporary tourism’ which generally refers to tourism occurring since the 1950s, characterised by expansive high velocity travel patterns and enabled by the availability of long haul commercial air travel (van der Duim, 2005). In Viet Nam it is often noted that tourism did

² Chapter two details in much greater detail the theoretical and methodological approaches that underpin this research.

not begin until after conflict with the United States ceased, and while research on tourism in Viet Nam emerged after this period, tourism has in fact occurred in Viet Nam for centuries, particularly domestic tourism and cross-border tourism with China (see Michaud & Turner, 2006 for example). Linking tourism and development is not new, with studies dating back to the 1960s recognising that tourism could create backward linkages and positive opportunities for host nations (Harrison & Schipani, 2007).

Research perspectives and understandings of tourism followed a similar trajectory to trends in development studies. A number of scholars have charted this intertwined path (Butcher, 2007; Jafari, 1990; 2001; Macbeth, 2005; Opperman, 1993; Scheyvens, 2002; Sharpley, 2009; Telfer, 2009; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). This section takes inspiration from these authors in exploring the trends and dominant paradigms in tourism and development since the 1950s, to provide some historical and contextual background for understanding the progression of the tourism-development nexus. Although appearing chronologically, the theoretical approaches to tourism and development discussed below do overlap and co-exist.

Modernisation theories

The dominant paradigm of development in the post-WWII period of the 1950s and 1960s was modernisation theory. Enhanced awareness of the increasing affluence of some parts of the world in relation to others, increasing decolonisation, and concerns within the United States about the spread of communism inspired debates about the 'correct' development path (Willis & Kumar, 2009). Influenced by theories such as Rostow's five stages of development (an anti-communist manifesto), development was envisaged as a lineal progression from a 'traditional' society to a 'modern' society (Opperman, 1993). The terms 'modern' and 'western' are highly problematic, inferring that the capitalist economic state of 'western' or 'developed' countries equates to modernity and a desirable economic model for all. It also implies that 'less developed' countries, before experiencing 'modernisation,' are backward, which is highly western-centric.

In modernisation theories, development was explicitly a process of economic growth, requiring industrialisation, urbanisation, nation-state building and an embrace of scientific

economic rationality (Willis & Kumar, 2009). In this context, tourism was viewed as a 'growth pole' to stimulate economic growth, attract foreign exchange, diversify the economy and generate employment (Telfer, 2009). It was assumed that advocating tourism in less developed countries would bring national economic growth and modernisation (Scheyvens, 2002; Sharpley, 2009), which encouraged the World Bank to invest in tourism projects for the first time (Hawkins & Mann, 2007).

Dependency theories

Scholarship in development studies through the 1970s recognised that there were structural factors such as capitalism, colonialism and imperialism that explained uneven development patterns and limited the development capacity of some countries. Marxist theories influenced the well-known 'dependency theories,' which argued that the disadvantages of 'third world' countries stemmed from colonial histories and existing capitalist processes that allow 'western' countries to exploit 'third world' countries (Willis & Kumar, 2009). From this perspective, both international aid and tourism are criticised as forms of neocolonialism, continuing the dependency of the 'third world' on western countries (Desai, 2009; Nash, 1989 in Sharpley, 2009). Economic growth remained the key goal of development in dependency theories (Willis & Kumar, 2009).

The influence of dependency theories can be seen in the tourism literature, where it was recognised more explicitly that the economic benefits of tourism often did not reach the host communities or country, and were often never intended to (Scheyvens, 2002). As a consequence, donors became more cautious about embracing tourism as a means for achieving development. Around the same time as dependency theories were gaining support, a global environmental movement was mobilising, which in turn sparked concerns over tourism's environmental impacts. From both these paradigms, a voluminous body of critical literature describing tourism impacts emerged, including descriptive accounts of the environmental impacts of tourism, and how tourism reinforces inequalities and power relations. The descriptive nature of tourism scholarship continues to dominate the tourism literature today (Hawkins & Mann, 2007).

Neoliberalism

Through the late 1980s and 1990s neoliberalism emerged as the dominant paradigm in global economics, and its principles were forcibly spread through the conditional loans provided to 'third world' countries by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Although economic growth remained the goal of development, the emphasis shifted to the market to control development and on export-oriented growth as a means of earning foreign exchange. The emphasis on 'rolling back the state' was in stark contrast to previous development theories which had placed great importance on the state in shaping development (Willis & Kumar, 2009). As neoliberalism accused states of failing to care for their citizens, the number of development agencies and NGOs proliferated and much greater attention was paid to the role of these organisations in development theory and practice (Hailey, 2001). Despite a wealth of research on development agencies and NGOs, scholarship from this period is characterised by generalisations that either proclaimed the advantages of development agencies or broadly criticised their role (Farrington & Bebbington, 1993; Fisher, 1997). In this neoliberal climate, tourism was seen as a useful way to participate in the global economic system, earn foreign exchange and pay off debt (Brohman, 1996; Scheyvens, 2002).

Alternative development, sustainable development

The alternative development paradigm emerged in the late 1980s in opposition to theories of development that were inspired by modernisation theory (Butcher, 2007). Although alternative development encompasses a range of different approaches, the key characteristics are grassroots approaches supporting development that is people-centred, endogenous, and driven by community participation (Sharpley, 2009). The growing focus on grassroots development saw the role and popularity of NGOs expand further, as they were seen to be operating outside of the neoliberal focus on economic profit, and their perceived neutrality made them ideal organisations to facilitate the participatory processes that define alternative development (Willis & Kumar, 2009). Paradoxically, this support for NGOs and development agencies under the alternative development paradigm occurred simultaneously with the growth of neoliberalism, which also elevated the role of NGOs for different reasons as discussed above.

Around the same time that the alternative development paradigm became a prominent development approach, the environmental movements that had been mobilising and raising awareness of environmental issues since the 1970s led to the Brundtland Commission in 1987 and the Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 from which the concept of 'sustainable development' emerged (Willis & Kumar, 2009). Alternative development and sustainable development are often treated as synonymous. The 'buzz' word of the 2000s, 'sustainability' initially referred to concerns over the use of natural resources, but has since expanded to include social, economic and cultural resources.

Sustainability discourses have permeated both development and tourism rhetoric and practice to such an extent that they are inextricably linked. Under the umbrella of this alternative development/sustainable development paradigm the concept of alternative tourism emerged. Alternative tourism developed in opposition to mass tourism, and was promoted as a panacea to the adverse effects of mass tourism identified in earlier research. Various new forms of 'alternative tourism' emerged during the late 1990s and 2000s, including community-based tourism, of which ecotourism is a particular form, volunteer tourism, justice tourism, fair trade tourism, responsible tourism, ethical tourism, and agrotourism. Alternative tourism advocates neopopulist ideals that emphasise community participation in decision making and seeks community empowerment (Stevens, 2010). The agency of host communities is recognised, and the way in which people from developing countries are often positioned in tourism activities as the 'Other' (Said, 1978) is highlighted. Alternative tourism employs a 'weak sustainability' approach to sustainable development, encouraging economic growth through sustainable use of natural resources. The development of ecotourism stemmed from this concept (Scheyvens, 2002).

The biggest shift in tourism literature in recent years occurred with the development of Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT), an approach to tourism that seeks to put poverty reduction at the heart of the tourism agenda (Hawkins & Mann, 2007; Mowforth & Munt, 2003; Scheyvens, 2002; Scheyvens, 2006). The development of PPT stemmed from a move by the development industry in the 1990s to elevate the issue of poverty alleviation to the key development focus (Bebbington, 2004; Scheyvens, 2006). PPT is "broadly defined as tourism that generates net benefits for the poor" (PPT Partnership 2004, in Chok et al.,

2007, p. 147). It is an approach, rather than a specific product or sector of tourism and thus differs from alternative forms of tourism (Ashley et al., 2000). PPT to date has remained focused at the local level (Ashley & Goodwin, 2007).

Corporate social responsibility among tourism providers has also grown in recent years in practice and as a subject of academic interest. How far tourism providers will go to be socially and economically responsible (as opposed to the more familiar environmental responsibility) is yet to be seen (Scheyvens, 2002). Changes in tourist demands must be acknowledged too, with a greater number of tourists seeking tourist experiences that are more environmentally sustainable and contribute positively to local communities. The extent to which tourists change their travel patterns and expenditures as a result of these stated desires remains unproven; however sceptics consider that currently it is more rhetoric than reality (Butcher, 2007; Simon, Hanoi tour operator, pers comm., 2010). To cater for these supposed 'responsible' tourists, there has been a proliferation of tour operators around the world claiming to offer 'responsible tourism' products.

Over the last decade there has been considerable debate around 'alternative tourism,' including a growing argument that mass tourism and alternative tourism are not necessarily polar opposites in scope or ethics (Scheyvens, 2002). Proponents of alternative tourism are frustrated by continuing suppositions that alternative forms of tourism (particularly PPT) must be small scale (Ashley & Goodwin, 2007). Critics argue that alternative tourism, like mass tourism, perpetuates dependency and unequal power relations between western and third world countries (Mowforth & Munt, 2003). Other critics point out the lack of substantiated evidence that initiatives claiming to be pro-poor or sustainable have actually benefited local people (Fennell, 2001 in Harrison & Schipani, 2007). Some argue that alternative tourism approaches need to incorporate mass tourism in order to make the industry more sustainable, as mass tourism represents the largest proportion of overall tourist movements. Community-based tourism has been criticised specifically for being "full of claims but short on data and quantitative analysis" (Kiss, 2004 in Harrison & Schipani, 2007, p. 196). It also remains to be proven through substantiated research how tourism, of any type, can contribute to the wider development goals of the host community or nation (Sharpley, 2009). Burns (1999) developed a continuum that places 'tourism first' (in which developing the industry is the focus) at one end of the

spectrum, and 'development first' (where tourism planning is motivated by wider development needs) at the other end. This continuum is a useful starting point when considering what sustainability means for particular tourism initiatives. This extreme variation in understandings of sustainable tourism means tourism remains a double-edged sword, both despised and revered in relation to its impact on sustainability (Mowforth & Munt, 2003).

Poststructuralist approaches

Poststructuralism has had a major influence on development since the 1990s, focusing especially on discourse, power and knowledge. Postcolonial approaches in development studies call for the inclusion of previously excluded voices, on the basis that the material and discursive legacies of colonialism perpetuate inequalities in power relations and dominance of western ideologies, practices and knowledges (McEwan, 2009). Postdevelopment literature, most notably that of Escobar (1995a), rejects the discursive construction of the 'third world' as poor and the subsequent legitimisation of intervention that such discourses provide. Escobar³ pushes for a focus on local knowledges and practices as a means of allowing local people to construct their own views and understandings of development (Power, 2003). The influence of poststructural approaches can be seen through the example of the sustainable development paradigm, which has more recently been highlighted as a socially and politically constructed concept that is highly contested and charged with power (Mowforth & Munt, 2003).

Poststructural perspectives have informed tourism scholarship too throughout the 2000s, to gain more sophisticated understandings of the complexity of processes (particularly power relations) that operate within tourism, and are reconstructed as a result of tourism (Butcher, 2007; Scheyvens, 2002). The growth in critical perspectives from poststructural researchers contributed to a 'critical turn' in tourism studies, which elevated questions about the nature of power relations, discourses and representations in tourism (Bianchi, 2009). Bianchi criticises the critical turn however, as being too detached from

³ Chapters three and four elaborate in greater detail Escobar's work.

political economy and the material aspects of tourism and mobility, and I tend to agree with him.

Summary

The bodies of literature on tourism and development are tightly intertwined, and the linkages between the two areas of study set the scene for the emergence of community-based tourism (CBT), which is discussed in the following section. The issue of tourism *for* development remains a highly contested area of scholarship. The very brief review of the scholarly progression of the tourism and development literature leads to a conclusion that the tourism-development nexus involves complex, multiple perspectives and there is no single right approach (Palomino, forthcoming). It is heartening that scholarship on tourism and development has moved beyond a narrow focus on tourism for economic growth, yet interestingly we have reached a stage where critical theory on tourism is perhaps too removed from the political economic realities of tourism (Bianchi, 2009). There is substantial potential for future research that bridges this gap, and it is hoped that this thesis will contribute to the literature by using the methodological approach of actor-network theory to explore discourses, power relations and representations in community-based tourism in a manner that is grounded in material economic and political realities.

Community-based Tourism

The concept of community-based tourism (CBT) emerged from the alternative tourism paradigm and the development of pro-poor tourism, as discussed above. The term CBT is used very flexibly in rhetoric and practice. More rigorous definitions of CBT can be found in the literature however, and the following quotes encapsulate the academic consensus:

“Community-based tourism development would seek to strengthen institutions designed to enhance local participation and promote the economic, social and cultural well-being of the popular majority. It would also seek to strike a balanced and harmonious approach to development that would stress considerations such as the compatibility of various forms of development with other components of the local economy; the quality of

development, both culturally and environmentally; and the divergent needs, interests and potentials of the community and its inhabitants” (Brohman, 1996, p. 60).

“Tourism that takes environmental, social and cultural sustainability into account. It is managed and owned by the community, for the community, with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life” (Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute, in Goodwin & Santilli, 2009, p. 11).

“CBT most commonly refers to communities which engage in ‘front line operations’ that incorporate direct interface with tourists, such as home-stays and lodges; small eco-tours; guide and porter services for local tours/treks; cultural performances for fee paying visitors; teahouses; refreshment kiosks and restaurants; and souvenir/curio/handicraft outlets. These will generally be co-located within the residential boundaries of a community, or in close proximity adjacent to the community. Many of these activities will be initiated in advance of visitation to the area and will be based on the development of local resources as attractions or as direct services to tourists. By definition, they will tend to be small – SMEs owned either by the community on a cooperative basis, or by families and/or individuals within the community” (Xu et al., 2008, p. 3)

“CBT can therefore be defined as tourism owned and/or managed by communities and intended to deliver wider community benefit” (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009, p. 12)

As Redman has identified, CBT “shows a progression, from a development perspective, as it incorporates the ideas of participation, empowerment and the importance of the social, rather than just economic or environmental aspects to development” (2009, p. 10-11). It is important to acknowledge that although some CBT initiatives have pro-poor elements, CBT does not equate to PPT.

The CBT literature tends to be 'functional' and descriptive rather than critical (Blackstock, 2005) and there are few examples of long term success in the CBT literature (Harrison & Schipani, 2007). Most commonly cited as outcomes are that CBT projects⁴ have been developed in a supply oriented way, often prove not to be commercially viable and have short life spans (Ashley & Goodwin, 2007; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Butler & Hinch, 2007; van der Duim & Caalders, 2008). The commercial viability of CBT initiatives is significantly hampered by the focus on hospitality with little attention given to other, complementary tourism activities for tourists to participate in (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; Andrew, tourism consultant, pers. comm., 2010). The theorisation of CBT in the literature is not without its critics either. In Blackstock's (2005) critique of CBT literature and advocacy she identifies three main points where CBT diverges from the ethos of community development: firstly CBT is often used as a method for ensuring long term sustainability of a tourism product rather than as a means for empowering local residents for wider community development. Secondly, the CBT literature implies that local communities are homogenous entities; thus failing to recognise the diversity of individuals, values and power relations in any given community. Thirdly, within CBT literature there is a failure to recognise the often numerous constraints to local control. As this thesis will demonstrate, there is truth in all three of Blackstock's accusations, particularly in the Vietnamese CBT context.

Tourism and International Development Assistance

International non-governmental organisations have been involved in tourism for many years, primarily as critical forces protesting against adverse impacts of tourism (Holden & Mason, 2005). Increasing recognition of PPT as an approach, and the continued focus on poverty alleviation within the broader development paradigm has raised the profile of

⁴ Van Rooy (2001) draws attention to the problematic use of the term 'project' by NGOs, describing projects as 'time-bound, pre-defined sets of objectives, assumptions, activities and resources which should lead to measurable, beneficial impacts' and are inappropriate for development that seeks to alter human behaviour (Fowler 1997, p. 17 in van Rooy, 2001, p. 36). Van Rooy attests that many limitations of NGO effectiveness stem from use of this term, and I am inclined to agree. Henceforth I use the term 'initiative,' which I feel gives more holistic scope to view community-based tourism as an approach to tourism, rather than a series of activities and outcomes that are defined by a development agency (or government institutions and the private sector for that matter).

tourism's potential to alleviate poverty. Using tourism to alleviate poverty has been embraced by the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) since 2002 (Redman, 2009), most recently through the 'Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty' (ST-EP) programme⁵. Development agencies and NGOs have responded by initiating programmes involving the use of tourism as a means to achieve wider development goals, particularly poverty alleviation (Hawkins & Mann, 2007). Many other development agencies, donors, research institutions and bilateral and multilateral donors have contributed resources for establishing tourism strategies and programmes that seek to reduce poverty, including through community-based tourism (Harrison & Schipani, 2007; Scheyvens, 2006).

As stated earlier, little attention has been paid to the role that development agencies and donors play in the development of tourism initiatives (Hawkins & Mann, 2007; Lindberg et al., 2001). Similarly, independent evaluations of the ongoing success of tourism initiatives after external assistance has ceased, are rare, and are “a difficult and messy business” (Edwards & Hulme, 1996b, p. 4). As Bebbington notes, research on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) tends to get caught up in questions of definition, asking ‘what is an NGO?’ and seeking ‘endless typologies’. Many studies take the organisation as the unit of analysis, resulting in fragmented research that assumes separation between a NGO and other stakeholders (2004, p. 729). Development agencies or NGOs are also rarely analysed in terms of the institutional processes and social structures within which they are embedded (*ibid.*). Thus rather than focusing on organisations *per se*, this research seeks to contribute to the literature on tourism and development assistance by critically examining the key relationships formed between all actors involved in development agency assisted community-based tourism, and how these relationships are influenced by institutional and social structures.

It is important to explain how the term ‘development agency’ is used in this thesis. Using the term ‘development agency’ is preferable to that of ‘NGO’ for a number of reasons. The term NGO has been used prolifically in the development literature since the 1970s, and they

⁵ For a good summary of the ST-EP programme see Redman (2009).

are popularly understood as organisations that are established voluntarily and legally for non-profit purposes and without governmental administration (Dang, 2009). With the advent of the neoliberal era and emphasis on ‘rolling back the state,’ NGOs have enjoyed increasing popularity and responsibility (Raju, 2009). However much of the development literature struggles to define NGOs (Bebbington, 2004), and the term is considered by many to be too all-encompassing and consequently misleading (Clarke, 1991 in Farrington & Bebbington, 1993; Hailey, 2001; Raju, 2009). The distinctive identity NGOs enjoyed in the 1980s and 1990s has become hazy as a growing proportion of NGO funds are from official donors (Hailey, 2001) and NGO identity is also increasingly indistinct from other civil society organisations. The blurring of NGO classification is further complicated according to Dang, as

“some NGOs may in practice be closely identified with a political party; many NGOs generate income from commercial activities they provide through consultancy contracts, sales of publications, and organizing events; some NGOs are also not entirely non-governmental entities because they receive funding from their own government, from other governments, or from inter-government groups” (2009, p. 17).

To avoid the difficulties in classifying NGOs and in recognition of the blurred political realities, the term ‘development agency’ is used⁶. This excludes organisations that administer humanitarian relief, advocacy groups and membership-based ‘grass roots’ NGOs. The purpose of this thesis is in part to understand empirically *what* development agencies do, rather than explore in depth *why* they do it (I leave this complex and contested question to other researchers). Development agencies therefore remain an intentionally broad category, here referring to international organisations using international funds to initiate development programmes and projects for poverty alleviation and development, funded by both bilateral and private aid channels.

⁶ For an excellent summary on the changing identities of NGOs, see Raju (2009).

The Vietnamese context: a snapshot of Viet Nam

The Socialist Republic of Viet Nam is located to the east of the Indo-Chinese peninsula; with a land mass of 331,690km² and a coastline extending over 3000km.



Figure 1: Map of Viet Nam (Source: www.myvietnam.info)

The population count is approximately 85 million people, and is extremely diverse as described below:

“Vietnam is a multi-nationality [*sic*] country with 54 ethnic groups. The Viet (Kinh) people account for 87% of the country's population and mainly

inhabit the Red River delta, the central coastal delta, the Mekong delta and major cities. The other 53 ethnic minority groups, totalling over 8 million people, are scattered over mountain areas (covering two-thirds of the country's territory) spreading from the North to the South.” (Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, undated)

Viet Nam is a one party state, ruled by the Vietnamese Communist Party. The country is divided into 63 provinces, which each contain several districts, within which there are several communes. Each commune will have several villages or towns (Stevens, 2010). Each level has a governing body known as a People’s Committee. Taking the town of Sa Pa for example (which will be referred to in case studies later on), Sa Pa town is located in Sa Pa District, which is in Lao Cai Province. The Sa Pa District also contains a number of communes and villages. Key governing bodies are the Lao Cai Provincial People’s Committee (PPC) and the Sa Pa District People’s Committee (DPC), however there are lower level governing bodies and management boards at the commune and village level also.

Viet Nam has a turbulent political history. The land area was ruled by China for almost a millennium, and then by France from 1858-1945 (Redman, 2009). French rule was replaced by Japanese occupation during World War II, but this was to be brief; as the Japanese were defeated in WWII and the French returned to Viet Nam to rebuild their presence and control (Catford, 2006). Communist and nationalist movements had been slowly building since the 1920s, and following WWII protests against French rule increased in strength, led by Ho Chi Minh. The ensuing conflict known as the First Indochina War saw the French defeated during the famous battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954, which was a glorious victory for the Vietnamese and an embarrassing and catastrophic loss for the French (Redman, 2009). The country was left divided into two - the Communist North led by Ho Chi Minh, and South Viet Nam, which was a French protectorate that subscribed to a capitalist model of government. Communism was seen as a threat to world peace by the United States, and this fear that communism would spread largely brought about the conflict known as the ‘Viet Nam War’ or the ‘American War’, between North Viet Nam and its communist allies, and the South, which was supported by the United States of America and other anti-communist countries. The fall of Saigon in 1975 saw the creation of one unified government of Viet Nam for the first time – ruled by the Communist Party and led by

Ho Chi Minh (Catford, 2006; Fritzen & Brassard, 2007). Conflict was not yet over however, as after a series of border skirmishes Viet Nam invaded Chinese-supported Cambodia in 1978. In retaliation China briefly invaded north-western region of Viet Nam for a short period in 1979, leaving destruction in their wake (St John, 2006)⁷.

A century of colonial rule and war left economic, social and environmental scars in Viet Nam. The economy was in ruins and there was a significant damage to the environment and physical infrastructure (Redman, 2009). The country was virtually closed to the outside world through a trade embargo by America (and supporting countries) and closed borders. Agricultural production was crippled and Viet Nam was forced to import over 5.6 million tonnes of food in the period 1976-1980 (St. John, 2006). The long process of rebuilding the economy began across Viet Nam. The 6th Congress of Vietnam introduced economic reforms in 1986 known as *doi moi*, which were intended to facilitate a socialist market economy in Viet Nam. The resulting transitional economy and the success of these reforms were considered quite 'remarkable' in their initial implementation period (Asian Development Bank, 2007; Dixon, 2003), particularly as they did not conform to "the neoliberal view that rapid economic growth necessitates the replacement of state planning, privatization and domination of production by approximations to western market structures" (Dixon, 2003, p. 292). In a manner similar to many other East Asian countries, the Vietnamese government continues to maintain a central role in development initiatives in Viet Nam, with gradual movement towards a neoliberal capitalist economy (Masina, 2006).

Following the initiation of the *doi moi* reforms, Viet Nam slowly renewed, (re)established and repaired international relations. Following the withdrawal of troops from Cambodia in 1989, Viet Nam was able to restore diplomatic relations with most Asian countries, including China (Masina, 2006). The American embargo lifted in 1994 and full diplomatic relations with America resumed in 1995. Viet Nam regained access to World Bank lending in 1993, which combined with improved international relations allowed Viet Nam to access financial support for economic reform (*ibid.*). Viet Nam's international cooperation continued with accession to a number of international collaborations such as the

⁷ For a more detailed historical account of Vietnam's history since French imperial rule see Masina (2006) and Redman (2009).

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1995 (St John, 2006), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation group (APEC) in 1998 and the World Trade Organisation in 2007 (Redman, 2009).

Rates of economic growth and poverty reduction in Viet Nam over the last two decades are among the highest in the world; despite the Asian regional economic crisis (Asian Development Bank, 2007; Masina, 2006). Viet Nam has already achieved one of the Millennium Development Goals by halving poverty between 1990 and 2000 (UNDP, 2002). Although Viet Nam is no longer on the United Nations' list of 'least developed countries' (Sharpley, 2009), the number of people living in poverty in Viet Nam remains significant, with 29% of the population living beneath the international poverty line (UNDP 2005, in Catford, 2006). Ethnic minority peoples are overrepresented, comprising almost 14% of the population but yet accounting for 29% of those classified as 'poor' (UNDP, 2002). Approximately two thirds of the population are employed in the agricultural sector (SNV, undated [b]); for whom change is on the horizon as the government seeks to move beyond agriculture as the defining element of the economy (Minh, government official, pers. comm., 2010).

Inequalities have also rapidly grown since *doi moi* (Fritzen & Brassard, 2007) and there is evidence of tensions over the extent to which moving towards neoliberalism results in weakening of central government power (Dixon, 2003). As asserted by Masina, "the future for a market economy with socialist characteristics is uncertain, because the ideological rationale that supports the reform process is very ambiguous" (2006, p. 158). Masina goes on to argue that many contentious elements of the Vietnamese reform process are concealed behind a fictive generalised neoliberal consensus, limiting the opportunities for discussion about alternative strategies (2006). Certainly Viet Nam is still governed by top-down decision making approaches (Catford, 2006). This complicated political economy in Viet Nam provides an uncertain background for the implementation of community-based tourism, and a complex political and economic environment for development agencies to operate within. It does however provide an interesting setting for a study of community-based tourism, with the influence of socialism making for a unique study.

International Development Assistance in Viet Nam

“the healthy leaves cover the torn leaves”

Vietnamese proverb (Dang, 2009, p. 41)

International non-governmental organisations (NGOs)⁸ did not become active in Viet Nam until after 1954, and reached a peak in 1978 when more than 70 international NGOs were actively operating in Viet Nam, predominantly providing humanitarian and charitable assistance (Dang, 2009). Aid funds significantly dropped over the following decade, primarily as a response to Viet Nam’s occupation of Cambodia, and United States sanctions. Viet Nam’s need for assistance was high, not only due to the aforementioned sanctions but also as a consequence of the collapse of the former Soviet Union, which had been an important political and financial supporter (Wu & Sun, 1998). In addition, all development assistance was very tightly controlled by the People’s Committees and activities were closely monitored to ensure the government had maximum control (Catford, 2006). However the influence of *doi moi* extended to international development organisations and the value of international NGO assistance was recognised by the Vietnamese government. The People’s Aid Coordinating Committee (PACCOM) was established in 1989 to facilitate and encourage international NGO activities in Viet Nam, and coordinate with domestic partners. PACCOM is also responsible for processing of registration of foreign NGOs and ensuring the relevant work permits are obtained (VUFO-NGO Resource Centre, undated). The establishment of PACCOM had a remarkable impact, with the number of foreign NGOs working in Viet Nam rising from 70 in 1989 to 601 in 2008, and disbursement value rose from US\$13 million in 1989 to US\$241 million in 2008 (Dang, 2009, p. 54).

Since the mid 1990s foreign NGO assistance moved from relief work to poverty alleviation and development. The type of assistance by sector can be seen in the table below:

⁸ The existing literature on development assistance and aid in Viet Nam refers solely to NGOs, hence the use of this term in this section.

Sector	Proportion of total NGO assistance
Education	27%
Social issues	24%
Health	22%
Economic development	21%
Environment	5%
Relief	1%

Figure 2: Foreign NGOs in Viet Nam – assistance by sector in 2007⁹

The change in focus of much international development assistance to poverty alleviation, alongside the rapid expansion of tourism in Viet Nam provided new opportunities for international involvement in Viet Nam. The growth of tourism in Viet Nam over the last two decades is the subject of the next section.

The trajectory of tourism growth in Viet Nam

International and domestic tourism in Viet Nam has grown rapidly in the last 25 years. Following the gradual post-conflict reopening of the country's borders between 1986-92, international tourist numbers reached 1,351,300 by 1995 and doubled to 3,747,400 by 2009¹⁰ (General Statistics Office of Viet Nam, 2009). A number of factors influenced this astounding rise in international travel, beginning with the *doi moi* reforms which led to a lifting of restrictions on foreign visitors to Viet Nam (Rugendyke & Son, 2005). Tourism was seen as way of attracting foreign exchange that was all but absent from the Vietnamese economy due to an American embargo on trade. After *doi moi* private investment and foreign ownership were encouraged, this in turn provided for improved physical infrastructure necessary to support a burgeoning tourism sector (Cooper, 2000). Viet Nam thus heralded tourism as a prime development strategy to encourage economic growth (Schwenkel, 2006).

⁹ PACCOM's 2007 Annual Report in Dang (2009, p. 55).

¹⁰ It is noted that the 2009 figure for international arrivals in Viet Nam is down from a peak of 4,235,800 in 2008 (General Statistics Office of Viet Nam, 2009). It is assumed that this downturn is in part due to the global financial crisis and shifting 'fashions' in tourism destinations.

As discussed earlier, the lifting of the American embargo on trade and Viet Nam's accession to a number of international cooperative agreements such as the WTO, ASEAN, and APEC significantly enhanced Viet Nam's presence on the world stage and access to global markets and tourists (Cooper, 2000). Viet Nam also joined the World Tourism Organisation in 1981 (Redman, 2009). The absence of significant conflict in Viet Nam and growing political stability made the country more appealing for tourists, and Viet Nam's tourism sector benefited from the continual rise in international long-haul tourism in general and falling international airfare prices. In addition, Asian regional and domestic tourism has been on the rise in recent times, stimulated in part by growing wealthy and middle classes (particularly from China, Thailand and Viet Nam) and in part due to the expansion of low-cost airlines in the South-east Asian region (Cambridge & Whitelegg, 2006; Kua & Baum, 2004 both in Cochrane, 2007).

Visitor attractions in Viet Nam are plentiful and varied. Some visitors come for the 'sun, surf and sand' experience, others for the cultural attractions of different ethnic minority groups, and some to visit the numerous heritage sites reflecting Viet Nam's rich history from dynasties of emperors, to colonialism and modern warfare. Viet Nam has seven UNESCO World Heritage sites spread throughout the country. The majority of tourists in Viet Nam participate in tours rather than completely independent travel (Simon, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).

Academic research on tourism in Asia has been subject to increasing attention over the last decade (see Alneng, 2002; Hall & Page, 2000; Poh Poh, 2003; Winter et al., 2009) due to significant increases in international, regional and domestic tourism. However the lack of tourism case studies from Viet Nam is remarkable; usually attributed to difficulties that researchers experience in obtaining research permits (Scott et al., 2006; Taylor, 2008). The majority of existing studies on Viet Nam focus on war tourism. Key exceptions include Gillen's study (2009) on the challenges to tourist stereotypes posed by increasing numbers of Vietnamese tourists in Ho Chi Minh City, Michaud & Turner's study of domestic and international tourism in Sa Pa (2006), Rugendyke & Son's study of the development outcomes arising from the creation of Cuc Phuong National Park (2005), and a study by Lloyd that explores the recent history of foreign investment in tourism in Viet Nam and the

power struggle between the Vietnamese government and foreign tour operators (2004). Most recently, Redman (2009) studied tourism as a poverty alleviation strategy in Lang Co, Viet Nam. Significantly, although much of Vietnam's tourism attractions involve ethnic minority people living in mountainous areas, "the minorities of Vietnam are among the least studied people on earth" (Taylor, 2008, p. 27).

Community-based tourism, particularly ecotourism, is growing in popularity with western tourists. CBT sites in Viet Nam are established to achieve various objectives, including tourism for the sustainability of the environment, tourism for poverty alleviation, and in order to sustain the tourism product itself. Community-based tourism in Viet Nam is usually facilitated by an international development agency or NGO (Stevens, 2010), thus the next section summarises the links between tourism in Viet Nam and international development agencies.

Tourism and Development Assistance in Viet Nam

"It's the tragedy of a small nation, to have to depend on foreigners¹¹."

In recent years there has been an increased focus in Viet Nam on using tourism to achieve wider development goals, ranging from infrastructure improvements to poverty reduction. Recognition of community-based tourism in particular has grown in popularity as a mechanism for spreading the benefits of tourism (VUFO-NGO Centre, undated; SNV, 2009; Stevens, 2010). A number of changes to legislative frameworks that govern tourism have occurred that attempt to integrate tourism with development and poverty reduction, including the creation of the first Law on Tourism¹² (Hainsworth, 2008). Although needing more time to prove effective, this law is considered to be a positive example of the mainstreaming of Pro-Poor Tourism (Ashley & Goodwin, 2007).

There is a complex combination of international NGOs, development agencies, and tourism consultants supported by multilateral and bilateral donors working in tourism.

¹¹ Vietnamese novelist Ma Van Khang, *Against the Flood*, 2000 in St John (2006).

¹² The legislative framework governing tourism in Viet Nam is discussed in more detail in chapter three.

The most active development agency working in tourism in Viet Nam is the Netherlands-based SNV, who has been supporting tourism since the early 1990s (Hainsworth, 2008). Other active organisations include Caritas (Switzerland), GTZ (Germany), Agriterra (Netherlands), Counterpart International (USA), World Conservation Union (USA), IPADE Foundation (Spain). International environmental NGOs such as Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF) are working on CBT initiatives in protected areas. The latter have historically been focused on environmental issues but are now facilitating community-based tourism initiatives, primarily in the hope that a more prosperous community (through tourism) will be better placed to protect the natural resources on which the tourism product depends. There are a large number of donors also supporting community-based tourism initiatives, either directly or indirectly through infrastructure upgrades that are necessary to support tourism. Key donors include the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Spanish International Cooperation Agency (AECID), and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). Regional approaches are also gaining influence, most notably the Greater Mekong Strategy which involves Viet Nam, Cambodia and Laos in a number of joint initiatives including tourism development (Redman, 2009). Of the donors and organisations mentioned above, the vast majority have been involved in north-western Viet Nam, which has witnessed some of the most rapid expansion of tourism in the country, particularly CBT. To understand the attraction of north-western Viet Nam to both tourists and development agencies, the following section provides some context.

Tourism in northern Viet Nam

The vast majority of rural tourism activities in northern Viet Nam involve some form of interaction with ethnic minority groups. The provinces west and north-west of Hanoi are some of the poorest in Viet Nam, due to a number of factors¹³. These regions are isolated and remote, with mountainous topography. This topography, combined with a harsh climate makes agriculture very difficult, and generally only one crop of rice per year is able

¹³ Sourced from UNDP (2002) and SNV (pers comm, 2010).

to be grown. This small annual rice harvest is typically only just enough to feed a household unit for the year (Ly Lo Mai, pers comm., 2010)¹⁴. As a comparison, in the Mekong Delta four crops of rice are harvested each year. The land in the northern provinces is steep and subject to erosion, and water supplies are extremely scarce outside of the wet season, and thus it is difficult to grow other crops. A high proportion of inhabitants belong to ethnic minority groups who have traditionally been subject to discrimination by larger ethnic groups. The ethnic minority peoples commonly have insecure land tenure and increasingly reduced access to forested areas, which are used for fuel, building materials, and are a resource for growing or foraging for food. The ethnic minority peoples have limited access to quality social services, such as health care and education. For example, illiteracy in the north-west of Viet Nam is approximately 20%, compared with 4% in the red river delta area around Hanoi (Taylor, 2007, p. 17), and in 2002 illiteracy in Vietnamese was four times higher among ethnic minority groups than the Kinh majority group in rural areas (*ibid.*, p. 18). The ethnic minority peoples living in the rural north-west have limited access to credit and productive assets, and limited participation in governance, decision making, and public life. This is partly due to low levels of education, lack of access to public information in languages other than Vietnamese, and limited efforts by local government to engage with ethnic minority groups on matters of public interest. In addition, it was my experience that many people from ethnic minority groups in the north-west of Viet Nam can speak only basic Vietnamese at most, which was described during interviews with development agency employees as a serious handicap to meaningful participation in governance and participatory processes.

Chapter three will introduce five case studies in northern Viet Nam where CBT projects are at various stages of initiation or implementation. All case studies involve the establishment and operation of homestays as part of the tourism 'product.' Homestay tourism is almost synonymous with CBT in Viet Nam, and therefore it has a central focus in this thesis. The following section provides some historical and political background to the Sa Pa District, notable for the high level of involvement by international organisations, and the attention paid by academic researchers compared to other districts and provinces in

¹⁴ Tagault-Lafleur & Turner (2009) note that the Hmong emic definition of 'poor' generally refers to those unable to grow enough rice to cover their annual consumption.

Viet Nam (for example see Cukier et al., 1999; Hanh, 2008; Michaud & Turner, 2006; Thernstrom, 2002; Tugault-Lafleur & Turner, 2009; Turner, 2007)¹⁵.

The district of Sa Pa is thought to have been first inhabited by the ethnic minorities of the Hmong, Yao, Tay and Giay¹⁶ (Michaud & Turner, 2006). From the early 1890s the town of Sa Pa (then known as Chapa) was settled by the French colonial military ruler as an ideal location from which to control the nearby northern frontier with China (*ibid.*). From the early 1900s the cool climate of Sa Pa was a major factor in the development of Sa Pa town as a vacation site for the French colonial elite, and many hotels and holiday villas were built (Hanh, 2008). This continued, along with the supporting tourism infrastructure until the end of World War Two when prolonged conflict with China and France resulted in the majority of the buildings being destroyed, and the majority of the population deserting the town (Sa Pa Museum, undated). After the departure of the French, Sa Pa began a rebuilding process, which the government encouraged by incentivising Kinh people to resettle in Sa Pa.

Sa Pa District has become the major tourism hotspot in Viet Nam's north-west since the area reopened to tourism in the early 1990s (Hanh, 2008). Tourist numbers increased from 17,000 in 1992 to over 140,000 in 2004 (SNV, undated[b]), and hotels in Sa Pa town boomed from two in 1992 to over 80 in 2002 (Oostveen et al., undated). Western backpackers are being outnumbered by Vietnamese tourists, a reversal of the situation when tourism first reopened in Sa Pa in the early 1990s (Turner, 2007). The key attractions for western tourists are the architectural styles of Sa Pa town, colourful textiles available for sale and the range of single and multi-day trekking opportunities, including staying overnight in village homestays owned by ethnic minority people. The attraction of Sa Pa is quite different for domestic tourists, who rarely venture out of Sa Pa town itself. For these tourists, Sa Pa is appreciated primarily as a cool retreat from the hot lowlands, and karaoke and dining out are popular activities.

¹⁵ Contextual information on the remaining three case study sites is contained in chapter three. These particular CBT initiatives are in earlier stages of development and therefore feature less regularly in the analysis.

¹⁶ Note Vietnamese diacritics have been excluded from Vietnamese words.

The district is described in the local government's tourism information centre promotional material as having "enchanted, grandiose landscapes of infinite variety in an unspoilt environment, diverse ethnic minority groups, unchanged authentic cultures, incredibly rich architectural and historic heritage, and a wonderful warm welcome: these are the pleasures awaiting visitors to Sa Pa" (Sa Pa Tourism, undated). The district includes the Hoan Lien Son National Park, which contains Viet Nam's highest mountain, Fan Xi Pan. Remnants of the French colonial past in Sa Pa are 'treasured' as a tourism drawcard, interestingly "denying the historical reality of the anticolonial struggle" (Biles et al., 1999, p. 228). However the benefits of the rapidly expanding tourism industry are not equally shared. This has not gone unnoticed by international development agencies who have been involved in Sa Pa since the late 1990s, primarily seeking to share the potential and benefits of tourism with the ethnic minority inhabitants of the villages surrounding Sa Pa town.

As Taylor (2008) has pointed out, in the existing literature there is a notable lack of attention to the non-state actors interacting with ethnic minority groups in Viet Nam. This research will therefore contribute to this specific area of research in Viet Nam, as well as the tourism and development literature more generally.

Thesis structure and objectives

Chapter Two outlines the research methodology of actor-network theory, introducing key terms from ANT including the process of *translation* as a methodological approach for tracing the building of an actor-network. The main thrust of the chapter considers ***what are the research contributions of applying ANT to a study of tourism for development?*** Insight is gained from an eclectic collection of other theoretical approaches: Foucault's governmentality and power/knowledge frameworks, poststructuralist theory, Pinch's concept of knowledge communities (1998; 2009) and feminist approaches to geographical research methods. The chapter details the process of data collection and undertaking fieldwork in Viet Nam, and discusses how issues of positionality and ethics impact on the research.

Chapter Three begins with five case studies from northern Viet Nam to provide empirical examples of existing and planned CBT activities. Through these case studies the reader is

familiarised with the key actors, both human and non-human. The remainder of the chapter then uses Callon's (1986b) *phases of translation* to trace the building of CBT actor-networks. In doing so, this section considers the questions ***who are the key actors, human and non-human, in CBT actor-networks? How do the various actors perceive their roles and that of others? What power relations and contentious areas are made visible from using this approach?*** Thus, key actors such as development agencies, host communities, tour operators, government authorities, and homestay buildings are followed through the (translation) process of establishing CBT, providing insights into how various actors accept or negotiate their roles, and the roles of others. The relational approach of ANT reveals the power relations at play.

In *Chapter Four* a discourse analysis of interview material is undertaken to answer ***what are the dominant discourses that shape development assistance in community-based tourism in Viet Nam and how do dominant and counter-hegemonic discourses make the CBT actor-networks more or less durable?*** The chapter links discourses around identity, knowledge and power to postcolonial and postdevelopment scholarship in an effort to understand ***what are the connections between dominant discourses in CBT in Viet Nam, and hegemonic discourses of development more generally?***

Chapter Five builds on the previous two chapters to consider ***how and why are some parts of the CBT actor-network standardised and predictable, whilst others are fluid, negotiable and unstable?*** Murdoch's (1998) concepts of 'spaces of prescription' and 'spaces of negotiation' provide the theoretical framework to consider ***what are the material outcomes arising from these spaces of prescription and negotiation in CBT actor-networks?*** and ***what specific relations and transformations within CBT actor-networks are enabling or constraining for the viability of the initiatives?*** The discussion analyses how these spaces are discursively reinforced and explores the implications for power relations using insights from Foucault's power/knowledge framework.

Chapter Six draws together the central themes from this research to highlight key ***lessons for development practitioners operating in CBT***, with a particular focus on commercial viability. The possibilities for future research are also explored.

Chapter 2

Research directions: Doing ANT and CBT

Introduction

The key focus of my research from the outset was to gain insight into the roles of development agencies in community-based tourism (CBT) initiatives both internationally and in Viet Nam. I wanted to understand the relationship between discourses and practices of 'tourism for development,' and learn how relations of power influence relationships between actors, entities and places in CBT. As I undertook some initial background reading for this research, I realised how the operation and success of CBT was influenced by an extremely complex set of interactions between human and non-human factors. I chose actor-network theory as a suitable conceptual framework to shed light on the relational complexities of development intervention in tourism initiatives, and the power relations that manifest through various interactions and associations between actors. This chapter discusses the research process, including research methods, theoretical underpinnings, and limitations to my research. I also consider my positionality as a researcher and the consequential impacts on this study.

Qualitative Research

In geography, and especially in tourism studies, it is only relatively recently that qualitative research has been embraced as an alternative to traditional, quantitative means of data gathering and analysis. Informed by the work of feminist and poststructural theorists, qualitative research methods allow insight into a world where "multiple and conflicting realities coexist" and a "more holistic understanding of society can be articulated" (Hay, 2000, p. 19). In contrast to scientific, positivist methods of hypothesis testing, qualitative research has often been used to develop questions and theories throughout the process in an inductive way based on the principles of 'grounded theory' (Glaser & Strauss, 1968). This approach forms the overarching research methodology for this research.

Tourism studies have traditionally been heavily informed by quantitative research. Tourism research has historically been divided into two camps – tourism studies and tourism management (Ren et al., 2010), both of which have created a large body of research that is overly descriptive and focused on impacts and indicators. The critical ‘turn’ in tourism studies (Bianchi, 2009) has encouraged the growth of qualitative research methods in tourism studies to support critical inquiry, on the basis that these methods “provide opportunities to better explain complex processes” (Paget et al., 2010, p. 833). Despite its long reputation as an interdisciplinary subject, tourism researchers are continually challenged to “develop conceptualizations of tourism that encompass multiple worldviews and cultural differences as well as research praxis that recognizes and reflects the plurality of multiple positions, practices and insights” (Ren et al., 2010, pp. 1-2). Qualitative research methods provide an ideal holistic approach for exploring the complex social realities of development intervention in CBT. Interviewing in particular allowed me to gain insight into the range of perspectives held by various actors, and explore in some depth the areas of consensus and diversity that are constantly being contested and renegotiated through CBT initiatives. Qualitative research methods are also appropriate for informing an ANT analysis, as demonstrated through previous studies (for example, see Davies, 2003; Rodger et al., 2009).

Theoretical underpinnings

My research is underpinned by several different theoretical approaches, primarily using actor-network theory (ANT) and informed by poststructural theories such as Foucault’s framework for analysing power-knowledge and governmentality. Feminist geographical approaches have influenced the research methods. These theoretical perspectives, as relevant to my research, are briefly discussed below. Insights from postcolonialism and postdevelopment are also important to this research and are introduced in later chapters.

Actor-network theory

‘We won’t try to discipline you, to make you fit into our categories; we will let you deploy your own worlds, and only later will we ask you to explain how you came about settling them’ (Latour, 2005, p. 23).

Actor-network theory (ANT) originated some thirty years ago within sociological studies of science, technology and scientific knowledge (Johannesson, 2005; Law, 1999; Ren et al., 2010; Rodger et al., 2009). It is associated primarily with the work of Bruno Latour, Michel Callon and John Law (Bosco, 2006), who were inspired by the poststructuralist writings of Michel Foucault, Michel Serres, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Johannesson & Baerenholdt, 2009; Law, 2009). ANT has more recently been embraced by scholars from other disciplines, including geography where the work of Jonathan Murdoch has heightened understandings of how ANT can be used to understand diverse spatialities (1997; 1998; 2000).

Although coined *Actor-Network Theory*, ANT is a methodological orientation or approach, rather than a theory (Latour, 2004 in Johannesson, 2005; Law, 2009). ANT is based on the premise that the world is made up of complex relationships between human and non-human actors that create an actor-network. ANT is distinctive for its adherence to the principle of *symmetry*; involving the premise that there is “no prior conception of which materials will act and which will function as simple intermediaries for the actions of others” (Murdoch, 1998, p. 367). Thus networks are always *actor-networks*, as they cannot be reduced to either an actor alone or a network (van der Duim, 2007). Actor-networks emerge through a series of transformations that link the heterogeneous actors (human and non-human) together in a unique way¹⁷.

ANT literature is packed; perhaps too generously, with terms. Actors are perceived in ANT as relational effects, or ‘a patterned network of heterogeneous relations’ (Law, 1992, p.

¹⁷ Multiple actor-networks may be intertwined (Latham, 2002).

384). Thus in ANT, actors are non-existent without network relations (Johannesson, 2005). This relational approach sees power and agency as emerging from the performance of network relations, rather than being inherent qualities of individual actors (Davies, 2003; Johannesson, 2005). The terms *actors* and *actants* are used somewhat interchangeably in literature using ANT. For the purpose of this thesis I used the term 'actor' to refer to both human and non-human entities, unless explicitly stated otherwise. ANT seeks to describe the materially and discursively heterogeneous relations between various actors and actants in a given network (Ren et al., 2010). The process of *translation*¹⁸, developed by Callon (1986b), is essentially the relational process of building actor-networks from entities (van der Duim, 2007), referring to 'the processes of negotiation, representation and displacement which establishes relations between actors, entities and places' (Murdoch, 1998, p. 362). Translation is an ongoing process and thus an actor-network cannot be taken as permanent. Over time a network may become more stable, durable, and predictable. Conversely, a network may become unstable with actors continually negotiating such that the shape of the network is fluid. In examining these actor-networks, a key issue for researchers is therefore to ask "questions of how order is accomplished and made stable in time and space" (Johannesson & Baerenholdt, 2009, p. 15).

According to Law (1992, p. 386) the core of the actor-network approach is:

"a concern with how actors and organizations mobilize, juxtapose, and hold together the bits and pieces out of which they are composed; how they are sometimes able to prevent those bits and pieces from following their own inclinations and making off; and how they manage, as a result, to conceal for a time the process of translation itself and so turn a network from a heterogeneous set of bits and pieces each with its own inclinations, into something that passes as a punctualized actor."

¹⁸ The process of 'translation' is sometimes referred to as *modes of ordering* in the literature (Davies, 2003).

Law goes on to ask “why is it that we are sometimes but only sometimes aware of the networks that lie behind and make up an actor, an object, or an institution?” (1992, p. 384). When the inner workings of something are accepted and taken for granted, this is known as a *black box* (Latour, 1987). We often only become aware of such inner workings when the actor-network fails (Mould, 2009). Community-based tourism in Viet Nam is a black box, one that this research will begin to open through a study of the translations of CBT in north-western Viet Nam. This requires giving attention to how the network was established, how the associations between actors are formed, and how the roles and functions of all actors, human and non-human, are attributed and maintained (Rodger et al., 2009; van der Duim, 2007).

Methodologically an ANT approach requires the researcher to cast out any predetermined assumptions or distinctions. These may include assumptions about the significance of particular actors or the nature of their relationships with others, or perhaps assumptions about how long an actor-network is, or the scale that it operates at (Latham, 2002). It is only after an analysis of network relations is undertaken based on empirical work that conclusions can be made about the significance of individual actors (Johannesson, 2005). This methodological approach influenced my fieldwork significantly. Required to ‘cast out’ any predetermined assumptions about the role of development agencies in CBT in Viet Nam, my ANT-inspired research led me to give much greater attention to the private sector than expected. The material implications of this de-centred approach are discussed further in chapter six.

Actor-network theory and tourism

Few researchers have used actor-network theory to analyse tourism activities, even though tourism’s “emphasis on networks and network practices would seem to fit well the complex relations involved in tourism” (Johannesson, 2005, p. 134). Tourism networks have traditionally been seen “as made of relations between fixed nodes in one-dimensional time-space. They are depicted as territorial, resting on the physical proximity of homogenous actors” (*ibid.*, p. 135). In other words, tourism networks have traditionally been conceptualised as a medium rather than transformative process. In contrast, an ANT approach emphasises the topology of tourism, exploring the performativity inherent in

networks that allows groups, places and institutions to connect and interact across diverse spaces.

Although tourism scholarship has traditionally placed great emphasis on geographical localities, in recent years there has been an increased focus on thinking of tourism in performance-oriented ways (for example, see Crouch, 2004; Edensor, 2000; 2001; Hannam, 2006; Sheller & Urry, 2004; Urry, 2002). These perspectives seek to move beyond typical dualisms of host/tourist, producer/consumer, and local/global to embrace the multidimensionality of tourism and query the underlying networks to learn more about what makes tourism happen in particular places (Johannesson, 2005). Emerging from this research are a handful of studies that have applied ANT to tourism research (Franklin, 2004; Johannesson, 2005; Paget et al., 2010; Ren et al., 2010, Rodger et al., 2009; van der Duim 2005, 2007; van der Duim & Caalders, 2008). These studies have shown how actor-network theory (ANT) is a useful tool for investigating complex interactions occurring within tourism contexts. As an example, Johannesson argues that ANT is an effective methodological tool for understanding the ordering relations of tourism. In particular, he concludes;

“the general utility of ANT for tourist studies lies in its emphasis on relational materiality and general symmetry that together render it open to take non-human actors seriously into analysis. ANT creates space for appreciating the role natures, materials and technologies play in making tourism happen and in developing tourism places” (2005, p. 147).

Johannesson focuses on two aspects of ANT that he considers are of especial importance for tourism research. He discusses the concept of ‘tourism translations’ to draw attention to the assemblage work undertaken within tourism networks, and directs us to first trace the process(es) of translations in order to understand a tourism network effect. Johannesson also focuses on the spatiality of tourism and uses ANT to develop new understandings of the diverse spatialities of tourism. In contrast to Johannesson’s theoretical analysis, Paget et al. (2010) used actor-network theory to empirically examine the innovations of a French tourism company. They argue that

“contrary to most current claims, it is the concatenation that can be novel, and not necessarily the actors or the non-human entities themselves. The innovation here relates to a different way of creating associations” (2010, p. 844).

Paget et al. use this case study to illustrate how a set of translations result in new associations of humans and non-humans, leading to a shift in a network that allows the network effect of a tourism innovation. Van der Duim and Caalders (2008) also follow the translation process as their method of analysis of a pro-poor tourism development.

The studies that link ANT and tourism to date show there is no single way of doing tourism – it is a complex interlocking performance of languages and narratives, places, technologies, institutions and mobilised actors from which tourism actor-networks emerge (Davies, 2003, p. 208). It is this practice of tracing translation processes that this thesis will embrace in relation to CBT initiatives in Viet Nam.

Doing ANT and CBT: Research contributions

The key benefits of an ANT approach lie in the ability to avoid dualisms such as nature/culture, local/global, human/non-human that afflict many studies of social relations and representations (Murdoch, 1998), including tourism. ANT has grown in popularity due to the insight the approach provides into the entangled and ‘messy’ relations of actor-networks (Ren et al., 2010). In examining these relations, an ANT approach leads to new understandings of the processes of “negotiation, mobilisation, representation and displacement among actors, entities and places” (van der Duim, 2007, p. 966) that are continually operating in attempts to stabilise or destabilise a network.

ANT is not without its critics. Some describe ANT approaches as overly descriptive, obscuring difference and at risk of repeating the stories of only powerful networks (Davies, 2003). Others note the tendency to produce centred, managerialist studies that direct focus to the powerful (Law, 2009). Another problem is attributing agency within networks whilst maintaining the principle of symmetry (Ginn, 2005). ANT is also accused of lacking political and critical content (Bosco, 2006; Johannessen, 2005; Rudy, 2005; Whittle & Spicer, 2008);

and lacking awareness of the political agendas within ANT studies (Haraway, 1997 in Law, 2009). Recent work by Cupples (forthcoming) has overcome this latter weakness, using an ANT-based examination of the electricity actor-network in Nicaragua to explore power relations and the ways in which power relations are constantly negotiated. Other scholars have begun to do the same, showing through studies of contested spaces within neoliberalism how ANT can in fact highlight the power relations at play (Kendall, 2004; Larner & Walters, 2004).

The methodological objectives of this thesis are several, including countering the ANT criticisms described above. It is hoped that this thesis will further the emerging body of scholarship that uses ANT to explore politicised issues by uncovering “the history of decisions, competitions, and uncertainties that underlie the unproblematic present of powerful representations” (Davies, 2003, p. 208). This thesis is intended to move beyond a merely descriptive account of CBT to make relations of power in the actor-network more explicit and understood as a ‘tactic’ in the translation process. This thesis also seeks to tentatively explore the theoretical space opened up by ANT by remaining comfortable with the complexity and messiness of actor-networks rather than resorting to traditional categorisations (Murdoch, 1997) in an (probably impossible) effort to fully describe an actor-network. With the use of ANT in tourism studies still in its infancy, this thesis also participates in an ongoing dialogue, contributing an additional empirical study not only to tourism scholarship but also to that of development studies.

Foucault’s power/knowledge framework

Power in ANT is a relational effect and emerges through processes of translation. According to Latour, power is in the relations, rather than in the actors themselves. Power is therefore dependent upon the actions of others (1986, in Rodger et al., 2009). This research is informed by Foucault’s theorisation of power, which is briefly summarised here. Foucault defined power as an immanent force and a dynamic social relation, and therefore always used the term ‘relations of power’ (Wearing & McDonald, 2002). In his own words, power is a “complex strategic situation” consisting of “multiple and mobile field of force relations” (Foucault, 1978, pp. 93-102 in Cheong & Miller, 2000). This understanding of power is in

contrast to the mainstream conceptualisation of power as a resource or capacity that can be obtained or possessed (Cheong & Miller, 2000; Wearing & McDonald, 2002).

Foucault sees power and knowledge as almost inseparable, as explained in the following quote:

“Power and knowledge directly imply one another; there is no power relation without correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” (Foucault, 1977, p. 27 in Wearing & McDonald, 2002).

The key concepts of power and knowledge inform Foucault’s analysis of governance (Wearing & McDonald, 2002). Foucault’s concept of government is based on indirect relations of power that enable the ‘conduct of conduct’ or the attempt to “shape human conduct by calculated means” (Li, 2007, p. 5). In this view, power is a normalising force, “something that works its way into people’s live through their acceptance of what it is to be or how they should act within particular contexts and scenarios” (Allen, 2003, p. 76). In order to decipher the power relations at play Foucault suggests looking for the “routine deployment of techniques – spatial, organizational, classificatory, representational, ethical or otherwise, depending upon the forms of power involved – which seek to mould the conduct of specific groups or individuals and, above all, limit their possible range of actions” (*ibid*, p. 67).

Foucault’s theorisation of power resonates strongly with actor-network theory, both being contingent on performative relational practices to generate reality. Foucault’s power/knowledge and ‘government’ frameworks are applied throughout this study to interpret the ways in which relations of power are simultaneously created, negotiated and made durable or unstable through CBT actor-network translation processes.

Feminist research

My use of actor-network theory to investigate the relations of power involved in development interventions in tourism in Viet Nam is influenced by feminist

poststructuralist theory and feminist geography. This approach provides valuable insights into the dynamic production of social meanings and knowledge, particularly through discursive fields (Weedon, 1997). Amongst the multiple and competing visions of feminist geographies (England, 2006) there is a common thread that analyses issues of power and power relations, and investigates “how knowledge is both powerful and political” (Glesne, 1999, p. 11). Feminist poststructuralist theory fits well with an ANT approach, and in this thesis I use these feminist geography perspectives to investigate what counts as knowledge in the context of CBT actor-networks in Viet Nam, and how situated knowledges are integral to an understanding of the power relations at play.

The concept of situated knowledge is closely tied to the concept of reflexivity (Rose, 1997). I use feminist theoretical perspectives on positionality to write myself into the research, in order to acknowledge and attempt to understand the intersubjectivities created through interactions between the research participants and myself (Glesne, 1999). How power relations between the researcher and the researched influence the research methods, analysis and writing are also addressed later in this chapter.

Data Collection

In the field

My research involved spending six weeks in northern Viet Nam in March and April 2010 undertaking ethnographic research. I spent approximately four weeks in Hanoi, where the vast majority of development agencies and NGOs in Viet Nam are based. For two days I visited Chieng Yen commune, a very current initiative involving collection of four villages working with a development agency and local tour operators to initiate community-based tourism. I also spent approximately two weeks in the Sa Pa District, which has been the focus of the majority of development assistance in tourism in Viet Nam. These site visits are summarised in some of the case studies discussed in chapter three. For now, it is useful to point out that visiting these sites was an important part of the research process, as it provided the contextual basis for the formal interviews I had with various development agencies and tour operators, and it also allowed me to observe daily life with and without tourism. Scott, Miller & Lloyd’s account of research culture and challenges for researchers

undertaking fieldwork in Viet Nam (2006) prepared me for some of the challenges of undertaking research in this country.

To explore the complex relationships, discourses and social realities that exist within community-based tourism initiatives in Viet Nam using ANT, I first had to identify the relevant actors. Participants were selected initially via purposive and convenience sampling, which meant starting with actors who could provide insight into my research and to whom I had initial access to (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003; Rodger et al., 2009). In this instance, this approach meant my first interviews were with people whom I was able to contact from New Zealand prior to my departure; generally people who worked for organisations that had efficient and up to date websites. This method of participant identification was followed by snowball sampling. I continued interviewing until I felt I was nearing theoretical saturation (Crang & Cook, 2007; Strauss & Corbin 1990 in Rodger et al., 2009). As is commonly accepted good practice (Hay, 2000), I was careful to explain clearly how I got the participant's name and contact details. I had heard that in Viet Nam formal introductions were particularly important and therefore I endeavoured to be very transparent in my networking.

Nineteen interviews were conducted, with the range of participants including development agency or NGO employees, tour operators, government officials, university tourism lecturers, tourism consultants, and individuals living in villages that have received some form of development assistance for tourism. All interviews were semi-structured, and all except one were recorded. Supplementary notes were taken in a field diary. The interviews ranged in length from twenty minutes to one hour.

Participants based in Hanoi (typically employees of development agencies and NGOs) were contacted by email in the first instance, and where possible were provided with a schedule of topics for the interview. I found that knowing in advance the nature of the interview put some participants significantly more at ease, and some were better prepared as a result. For the remaining participants, the nature of the interview questions was discussed briefly prior to starting any formal interview. The participant was given the option of delaying the interview in order to think about the issues; however this was only accepted in one instance. With the exception of the interviews held in villages in Sa Pa

District, interview participants were invited to select the time and location of the interview. This method was an attempt to make the interview as convenient as possible for the participant, and was also preferred in the hope that the participant would choose a location where they felt comfortable and perhaps even empowered by their place in the research process (Elwood & Martin, 2000). Interview locations thus ranged from office boardrooms, to local cafes and participants' homes.

Concerned about the risk of a cultural *faux pas*, I sought advice from a Vietnamese English language teacher in New Zealand prior to leaving for Viet Nam. She taught me some basic Vietnamese phrases (which was all time and finances allowed for), and advised me on culturally appropriate ways of behaving. I was able to draw on this advice many times, in situations ranging from rituals surrounding the drinking of green tea, to appropriate behaviour during introduction formalities such as hand shaking, and culturally sensitive actions when inside private homes.

Interviews were all conducted in English with the exception of five interviews that were undertaken in villages in the Sa Pa District. These interviews were undertaken in Vietnamese with the assistance of an interpreter from Sa Pa¹⁹. Contrary to the advice I was given in Hanoi, I was not able to find a interpreter in Sa Pa with a high competency in Dzao or Tay (the languages of the people I interviewed in case study villages) and although all participants spoke some Vietnamese, I am aware that sometimes they did not fully understand questions or concepts due to Vietnamese being their second language. This is a disappointing limitation of this thesis, as only a superficial understanding of host community perceptions of CBT was able to be obtained.

The interview recordings were transcribed, in most cases a day or two after the interview. In some cases I had difficulty understanding the Vietnamese accent of the spoken English, and in some cases background noises (especially during interviews undertaken in rural settings) made it difficult to discern some words. Undertaking

¹⁹ Quotes from interviews undertaken in Vietnamese and translated by Ngoc Dan Phan have the pseudonyms Ly, Thi, Linh and Ut in the text. All other quotes were in English when originally spoken.

transcription as soon as possible after the interview thus became especially important, when my memory of the discussion was freshest.

In addition to the formal interviews, throughout my six weeks in Viet Nam I held dozens of informal discussions with various actors. Some of these were conversations with interview participants held during social events or outside of the interview process, others were with various tour operators, guides, hoteliers, restaurateurs, street vendors and the like – all in the aim of adding richness and depth to my research and my own understandings of tourism, development intervention, and Viet Nam. Secondary data was also utilised, including reports and promotional material produced by development agencies and tour operators, websites, and English language newspapers in Viet Nam.

Returning from the field

With my interviews transcribed whilst in Viet Nam, upon my return to New Zealand I immediately began the process of analysing the interview transcripts and secondary data. Interview transcripts were analysed through open reading and coding. The coding process involved reviewing the transcripts and field notes multiple times looking for key themes, which were organised primarily under key words generated by myself, with more higher-level analytical codes scribbled on the side of the page. Some scholars argue that this higher level coding should be left until a later stage in the process; however like Jackson (2001) and Crang & Cook (2007) I found it difficult to follow this advice. As explained by Jackson (2001, p. 202) “in practice, it is almost impossible to read a transcript without simultaneously reflecting on the theoretical premises or conceptual issues that led one to undertake the research in the first place.” The multiple readings and re-readings of interview transcripts, field notes and secondary data meant the data was constantly in a state of flux. Combined with the grounded theory-inspired ANT approach to this research process, data analysis and writing became a closely connected process.

As advocated in feminist theory, participants’ own words have been incorporated into the text as much as possible, respecting that they are the experts on their own lives. Pseudonyms are used for all research participants, and in some instances additional identifying features have been removed to ensure confidentiality.

Ethics

Human Ethics Committee

Prior to leaving for Viet Nam I obtained approval from the Human Ethics Committee (HEC) of the University of Canterbury. This is a standard requirement for any research involving human subjects, and involves making a written application that satisfies the HEC's Principles and Guidelines. The HEC requires considerable detail about the proposal, the nature and risk of participants' involvement, how participants will be recruited, how their consent will be obtained, and privacy will be maintained.

A key issue for Human Ethics Committees is that of informed consent. For researchers undertaking fieldwork in cross-cultural and/or developing country settings, this raises a number of difficulties. Examples include the potential for participants to have low literacy abilities and therefore cannot read an information sheet nor sign a consent form, or as Watson (2007) describes following her fieldwork in Samoa, there are different cultural understandings and practices for establishing trust and confidentiality, which signing official forms may be contrary to. There has been increasing criticism of Human Ethics procedures as they are not well suited to research taking place in cross-cultural contexts or developing countries (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003), and based on my experience I would agree.

Ethics in the Field

In Viet Nam, all employees of development agencies or NGOs and those participants working for tour companies appeared very comfortable with reading and signing information sheets (provided in Vietnamese and English). Viet Nam is known for complex bureaucratic procedures, of which these particular participants were highly familiar with through their work – hence I assume that having a bureaucratic process of my own was not unusual. However when interviewing Vietnamese people living in small rural villages, I felt distinctly uncomfortable with the idea of producing any kind of paperwork, partially as I was concerned about making those participants with poor literacy levels uncomfortable or embarrassed, and partially because the paperwork seemed completely out of context and

overly officious in the domestic setting of the participants' houses. Instead I chose to explain my research to participants over a cup of tea or lunch and exchange some initial pleasantries and enquiries (through a translator) to learn a little about daily life for the participants, all in the hope of making the participants feel at ease with me. Prior to asking interview questions I would ask them for permission, and explain their rights as participants. All this was done prior to the tape recorder being switched on, again in the hope that participants would feel free and comfortable to make their choice to participate (or not).

Positionality

Ethical choices of course continue when the fieldwork is over. How participants are interpreted and represented is highly influenced by the researcher's positionality. In addition to the methodological and contextual factors that have influenced this research, it is important to acknowledge how my personal positioning impacted on how I approached my research, interacted with participants, and interpreted my findings. That research can be completely objective has been criticised by feminist theorists over the last 20 years (see Rose, 1997) and as Crang and Cook plainly put it, "what we bring to the research affects what we get" (2007, p. 9).

Whilst in Viet Nam, I was aware of my immediately visible status as white, female, 'foreign' or 'western,' the latter two carrying an assumption of relative wealth. I also became aware of a myriad of different positions allocated to me by Vietnamese individuals, including that of a tourist, a tourism market researcher, and as an expatriate representative of the NGO community in Viet Nam. It would be an educated guess to describe how these various identities ascribed to me influenced who I was able to speak to and the nature of their answers. Nevertheless, I believe that some participants were willing to talk to me in the hope that I could positively influence the tourism initiative we were discussing. When interviewing homestay owners in Ban Ho and Ta Phin villages, people seemed unwilling to discuss the 'negative' impacts of tourism. It was difficult for me to ascertain whether this was due to a lack of conceptual understanding of the question, an interpretation error, or (the most probably scenario) if this was due to their perception of me as possibly able to

assist them with their tourism activities, and hence they were unwilling to reveal that tourism might be anything other than successful in their village.

Despite my explanations that I was a research student from a university in New Zealand, which was further outlined in my information sheet for participants and Human Ethics Committee consent forms, it became obvious that some participants still thought I had the potential to influence the number of tourists visiting their village, or the level of assistance a village could obtain from an NGO or development agency. It was difficult and somewhat demoralising (for me, and probably the participants) to explain that my research was more about understanding the general nature and interactions occurring in CBT, with little capacity or intention to bring immediate support or relief to a particular situation. These difficulties and misunderstandings that occur when undertaking research in Viet Nam are well documented by Scott et al. (2006).

I had expected to find myself in the uncomfortable position of having a research participant expect some form of compensation for their participation, as is often the case in countries of the developing world (Scheyvens & Storey, 2003) and in Viet Nam specifically (Scott et al., 2006). Whilst in Viet Nam I paid for the drinks of those participants that I met with in local cafés, and contributed financially to the meals I shared with interview participants in the villages of Ban Ho and Ta Phin. Beyond these courtesies however compensation was not asked for nor overtly expected, something for which I was grateful.

It is also both important to note and interesting to consider that however I was positioned by others, I was an actor in the actor-network. My interactions with both human and non-human actors have implications, however small, for the larger actor-network. Throughout this thesis I identify myself as an actor where I consider my actions to be of interest or significance in the CBT actor-network.

Choosing Viet Nam

My decision to undertake fieldwork in Viet Nam was not intentional from the outset. I have travelled fairly widely through south and south-east Asia, and the tourism-development nexus has always interested me, but there was no one location in the region

that immediately presented itself to me as an obvious place to research this topic. I sought advice from Tourism Resource Consultants (TRC), a consultancy based in Wellington that specialise in design and planning of tourism initiatives across the Asia-Pacific region. They had an office in Hanoi, Viet Nam, and offered me a work space there with logistical support. Some research on the tourism-development interface in Viet Nam revealed that there were development agencies and NGOs working within tourism in Viet Nam that had been poorly examined in the literature (see chapter one), so Viet Nam it was!

My relationship with TRC was beneficial from several perspectives. Their support enabled me to get a research visa easily, and they had many contacts within northern Viet Nam that I used as initial points of contact for setting up interviews with different organisations and companies. TRC's Vietnamese administrator in Hanoi was able to assist with translation of documents and emails into Vietnamese, and also with any coordinating phone calls that required an understanding of Vietnamese. I was careful to distance myself from TRC in terms of what I discussed with interview participants and which case studies I chose to investigate – avoiding discussions about contracts that TRC had been involved in or were currently working on.

I had visited Viet Nam three years prior, for a six week holiday hiking and cycle touring as an independent tourist. Whilst this ensured that there was little 'culture shock' experienced when I returned for fieldwork in 2010, it also meant that my first impressions and experiences of Viet Nam as a tourist had the potential to influence, positively or negatively, the ways in which I perceived Viet Nam and went about my research. There were certainly benefits of having visited Viet Nam before, ranging from the ability to cross the road in Hanoi without fear (not at all easy for first-time visitors, due to the congestion from motorcycles) to having some experience in cultural norms and expectations of conduct, and even in 'breaking the ice,' as many Vietnamese people expressed pleasure and pride in the fact I wanted to return for a second time.

I identify myself as a cautious advocate of tourism as a way of achieving broader development goals. I am cautious because of the extreme complexity of issues, ranging from the vulnerability of tourism as an 'industry' in general (for example, vulnerability to natural disasters, global economic climate, media portrayals of in-country events and so

on), to the multifaceted and complex factors that need to come together for tourism activities to be successful *and* benefit the wider community.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the methodological orientation of this study, and some of the reasoning behind the choice of methodological approaches and Viet Nam as a case study. It explains the process of collecting interview material and secondary data to inform this qualitative study. Inevitably, summarising the research methods makes the research process appear much smoother than it was. Undertaking qualitative research in a cross-cultural setting requires the researcher to be patient and open to a fluid research process; and my fieldwork and the subsequent data analysis has been an excellent learning experience in this regard.

As advocated by feminist theory this chapter acknowledges the issues and limitations that arose during the course of my research, and I have outlined my positionality to show how this is likely to have impacted on knowledge production throughout the research process. I have tried to persist with conceptualisations of myself as an actor in the CBT actor-network, and just as my activities, movements, thoughts, and conversations are fluid and continually active, so too are the actor-networks of which I am a part. Positioning myself in this manner has helped me to avoid static views of other actors and actor-networks, a concept that much of the following analysis pivots around.

Applying actor-network theory to a study of tourism *for* development puts this research in a relatively exclusive group of scholars attempting to do so. This research is thus part of an emerging theoretical and methodological dialogue arguing that ANT has much to offer for critical analyses occurring at the intersection of tourism and development studies. In drawing together several bodies of literature that are not commonly used together, it is hoped that some common criticisms of ANT and poststructuralist approaches can be avoided. This research also has empirical objectives however, and it is an empirical application of ANT that I turn to in the next chapter – exploring the translations of the CBT actor-network in Viet Nam.

Chapter 3

Tracing tourism translations

“Despite the presence and efforts of many agencies in assisting indigenous tourism enterprises, however, their longevity in operation is still not assured and they are likely to remain vulnerable in the future, situated as many are on the margins of an industry that is itself vulnerable to many influences”
(Aramberri & Butler, 2005 in Butler & Hinch, 2007, p. 324).

Introduction

Community-based tourism is a complex actor-network, where interactions are dynamic and fluid and thus difficult to analyse and describe (van der Duim, 2007). An actor-network approach provides a methodological means to view the processes involved in building and maintaining actor-networks. This chapter seeks to do just that – to use ANT to explore the processes involved in building CBT actor-networks. Through understanding how various actors make sense of their role in CBT, the actions they take, and their interactions with other actors, we can then begin to understand the processes of negotiation and representation that actors use in attempts to control the ordering of the CBT actor-network.

This chapter contains two sections. The first provides a brief empirical summary of five communes or villages in north-western Viet Nam where development agencies have assisted with setting up CBT. I visited three of the five sites²⁰, and interviewed stakeholders associated with all of the cited CBT initiatives. The empirical starting point for this analysis is important, and is advocated by other scholars. Davies (2003) for example suggests that a focus on a case study is a good starting point for an ANT analysis, as it makes empirical mapping of network dynamics manageable. Johannesson and Baeronholdt concur, stating that “ANT stresses an empirical investigation – the tracing of relations – and the description

²⁰ Time constraints and difficulties in gaining official permits for travel were the key reasons why two of the sites were not visited during my field research.

of these” (2009, p. 16). Thus the purpose of these case studies is to provide a contextual and material basis for the second section, which traces the process of translation in the CBT actor-network(s).

Translation is a description of the relational practices through which actors come into being within the actor-network of CBT. It is a “definition of roles, a distribution of roles and the delineation of a scenario” (Callon, 1986a, p. 26). Following the translations of CBT actor-networks involves identifying the actors and exploring the methods by which some actors try to define problems and solutions, and position themselves to speak for other actors. In tracing the translations, attention is paid to the processes through which durability of a particular actor-network is strived for (and simultaneously resisted). The second half of this chapter is structured around Callon’s (1986b) four phases of translation, which he calls problematisation, interessement, enrolment and mobilisation. The case study material is interwoven into this second section of the chapter, to reflect the multi-scalar nature of CBT and avoid any sense of bounded spatiality that a case-by-case analysis might give.

CBT case studies: introducing the actors

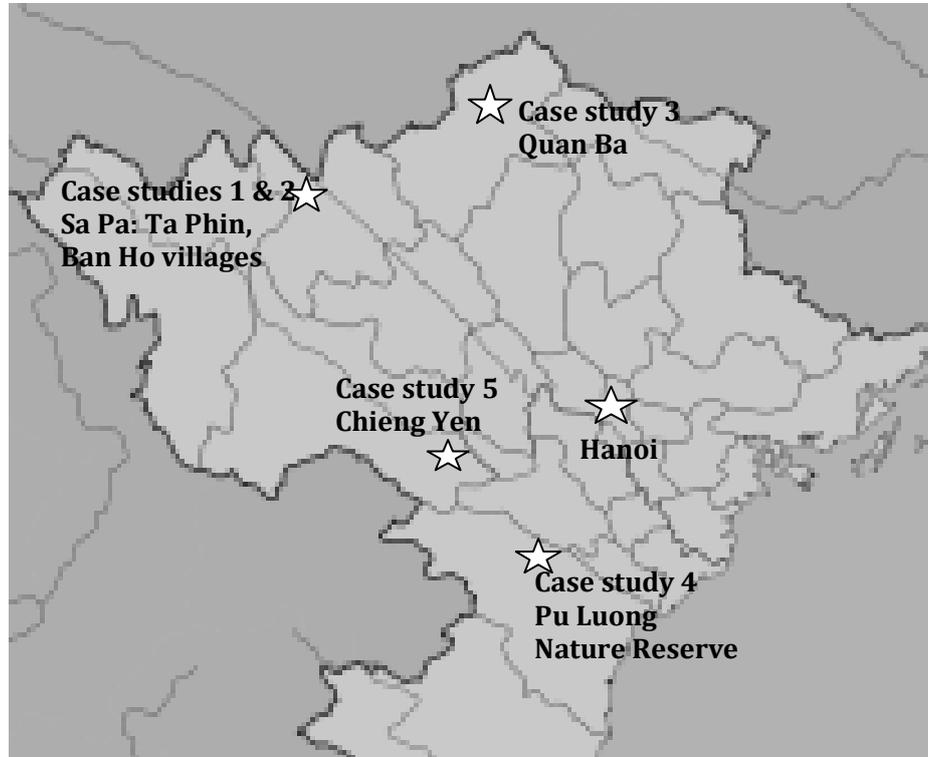


Figure 3: Location of case studies in north and north-west Viet Nam. (K Huxford)

Case study 1: Ban Ho village and SNV

The Dutch development organisation SNV began its involvement in tourism in the mid 1990s. Working in 35 countries (SNV, 2009), SNV focuses on capacity building, and in tourism the overarching goal is “to consolidate the collaboration between the private and public sectors, to involve local communities through participatory planning processes and cooperation with multi-stakeholders at local and national level. SNV also works closely with the relevant government agencies to implement tourism strategies, legal framework and policies” (GTZ, 2007, p. 34).

In 2001 the first community-based tourism initiative in Viet Nam was launched with a pilot initiative in Sa Pa called the ‘Support to Sustainable Tourism Project.’ This was intended to be “*a model of sustainable tourism, [to show] how it works in reality*” (former SNV employee, *pers comm.*, 2010). SNV and IUCN²¹ provided advisory services to the Tourism and Trade Department of the Sa Pa District People’s Committee. Funding was provided from Bread for the World and the Ford Foundation, with SNV providing the budget for a Vietnamese tourism advisor and the services of one of their international advisors (SNV, undated [b]; former SNV employee, *pers comm.*, 2010; SNV & IUCN, 2001). The objectives of the Support to Sustainable Tourism Project (SSTP) were to establish mechanisms for wider and more equitable sharing of tourism benefits and encourage active participation of communities in tourism-related decision making and implementation. The SSTP sought to enhance the capacity of local stakeholders to reduce negative impacts of tourism and to generally establish measures to ensure Sa Pa remains an attractive tourism destination (SNV & IUCN, 2001).

SNV’s role in the SSTP comprised a number of key actions, including the establishment of a Tourism Support Board in Sa Pa town and establishing activities aimed at capacity building of the Tourism Support Board and the SSTP team. These capacity building activities

²¹ The Support to Sustainable Tourism Project developed out of the ‘Capacity Building for Sustainable Tourism Initiatives’ Project spearheaded by IUCN in partnership with the Vietnamese Institute of Tourism Development and Research between 1997-2000. SNV assisted in the identification of Sa Pa as ideal for a pilot project, from which the ‘Support to Sustainable Tourism Project’ emerged (SNV & IUCN, 2001). IUCN ceased involvement in the project in July 2003.

were especially focused on English language skills, computer skills and included an in-country study tour. SNV carried out a market survey to inform trekking policy, developed a resource inventory, and initiated the establishment of a Tourism Information Centre in Sa Pa. Workshops were held to encourage the development of an hotel association in Sa Pa town, and specific CBT workshops were held for tour operators and project staff. Training for and establishment of homestays occurred in Sin Chai and Ban Ho villages, and village management boards were set up to support these new homestays.

The village of Sin Chai did not prove to be successful as a homestay destination, due to poor connections with other trekking routes, its close location to Sa Pa town, and lack of involvement of the private sector in marketing (Duc, former SNV employee, pers. comm., 2010; Huong, 2006). The village of Ban Ho is a different story. Ban Ho is a village of 200 households, with a population of approximately 1200 people of the Tay ethnic minority (Huong, 2006).



Figure 4: The village of Ban Ho in Sa Pa District (Source: www.vietnameasytravel.com)

The village is a day's walk from Sa Pa town, and private tour operators started taking visitors there for day trips in 1997. Through their client, SNV initiated many participatory planning sessions with the residents of Ban Ho *“to engage the local people in the planning side, they are the ones who give their own ideas, they decide on how they can develop the site”*

(Duc, former SNV employee, pers. comm., 2010) and a community management board was established to oversee the tourism development. With SNV's assistance (and IUCN initially) a number of local households obtained permission from the local authorities in 2001 to operate homestays and by 2006 there were 29 households with lodging permits (Huong, 2006). SNV facilitated training sessions, with the assistance of a vocational tourism training school based in Hanoi and local government authorities. The training sessions incorporated cooking, housekeeping, and hospitality skills. Community management board members were trained in tourism product development, management and accounting (SNV, undated [b]). According to a former development agency employee, initially the number of homestays far exceeded the demand, and *"there was some heated conflict among the local people at the time, too many homestays and the local people just thought that if they wanted to engage in tourism they had to renovate their houses and provide the homestay service"* (Duc, pers. comm., 2010). Diversification was encouraged to dissolve the tension, resulting in some people managing the hot water bathing site, the establishment of a small tea shop and a handicrafts shop, and the delivery of cultural performances. Twenty percent of income from the homestays is required to be contributed to a community fund. A rotation system was established to share the patronage of guests around all the homestays (Duc, pers. comm., 2010; SNV, undated [b]).

Ban Ho is widely considered to be a successful model of CBT in Vietnam (Minh, government official, pers. comm., 2010; Duc, former development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010; SNV, undated [b]; Thao, Hanoi tour operator, pers. comm., 2010). Some challenges remain however, as the rotation system is not enforced, all food consumed by tourists is imported to the village from Sa Pa town (by motorbike), and most recently the construction of four hydro-electric dams in the valley has created huge visual scars on the immediately surrounding landscape and has polluted the hot springs. Tour guides are now choosing to stay elsewhere with their groups and tourism is suffering as a consequence.

Case study 2: Ta Phin village, CIDA and Agriterra

In 2002 the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) funded a five year project jointly implemented by Capillano University and North Island College (Canada), and the Hanoi Open University (HOU). Titled the Community Based Tourism Project, *"the goal of*

the project was to alleviate poverty in a rural village, rural communities. But the purpose of the project was to train Hanoi Open University with a set of training modules that they could in turn deliver in other communities around Viet Nam” (Peter, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010). The initiative involved staff from the three universities jointly training district government officials, with the aim of raising awareness about CBT and how to implement tourism sustainably (Phuong, HOU employee, pers. comm., 2010). The initiative hoped to build the capacity for district government officials to act as trainers for tourism related projects, but this proved relatively unsuccessful as “they were government workers and they were told to come, but some of them simply didn’t have the capacity or the desire to go in and do training in their communities” (Peter, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010).

Two villages were chosen to be models for the development of CBT: Ta Van and Ta Phin. The following discussion focuses on Ta Phin village, a collection of hamlets located approximately ten kilometres from Sa Pa town. Ta Phin is occupied by people from the H’mong and Red Dzaio ethnic minority groups, who live in separate hamlets. This particular initiative worked only with the Red Dzaio inhabitants of Ta Phin. Permission was obtained from the government to allow overnight accommodation of tourists. A series of eight training modules were developed to train local people about being homestay hosts. The training sessions included subjects such as food safety, product development, HIV/Aids awareness, healthcare, sanitation, English language skills, and first aid (Phuong, HOU employee, pers. comm., 2010; Hamzah & Khalifah, 2009). Some ecotoilets were built, a village-wide rubbish pick up was held, and signs were erected detailing appropriate codes of conduct for visitors. The Ta Phin Cultural and Tourism House was set up to display handicrafts for sale and detail the code of conduct for visitors (Hamzah & Khalifah, 2009). At the end of the project in 2007 there were seven homestays available for tourists (Phuong, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010).

If Ban Ho is considered to be the most successful model of CBT in the Sa Pa district, Ta Phin is considered to be one of the least. The village is renowned for its aggressive handicraft sellers, who swamp tourists vans when they arrive and follow tourists through the village or along the track to entice sales of brocades. This is the reason given to me by several tour operators as to why they now rarely take tourists to Ta Phin. When I visited in

2010 there were only three homestays 'operating,' but marginally, with the owner of the most popular homestay advising that she had only about ten guests in the last year (Thi, pers. comm., 2010). Other people in the village would like to have homestays, but "*not many tourists come here overnight*" (Linh, Ta Phin resident, pers. comm., 2010). Two community buildings intended for handicraft sales were closed and locked up. A local government tourism official considers that

"in Ta Phin it's the people, they need more training, more help. Also we have to think about the marketing, and the way to bring tourists to their village. Ta Phin is too close to Sa Pa, I mean many tourists prefer to stay in Sa Pa instead of in the house. As the condition of the house is still difficult, they still keep the animals, I mean they don't pay much attention to the properties of the house, or they don't know how to make it, how to satisfy the tourists with the house for the night. Of course many tour companies they don't want to organise a homestay in their house because the conditions is too difficult" (Bao, Sa Pa government official, pers. comm., 2010).

The community management board is also reported to be redundant (Sinh, Sa Pa tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).

After the cessation of the CIDA funded assistance, Ta Phin has been one of the project sites of an initiative jointly implemented by Agriterra and Colecto since 2007. Agriterra is a Dutch organisation, set up by a conglomerate of Dutch rural organisations to work in partnership with rural organisations in 'less developed' countries to resolve issues around poverty. The key focus of Agriterra is to empower local rural organisations to independently promote economic, social and ecological development of rural areas (Agriterra, undated). Agriterra entered a partnership with Colecto, the business unit of the Viet Nam Farmers Union, to promote agri-tourism in Ta Phin²². In addition to homestays, Ta Phin was seen to have potential for greater development of tourist activities such as fruit picking, rice cutting, treks through rice fields, and the existing medicinal herbal baths using herbs from the

²² The Agriterra-Colecto partnership is based in three provinces in Viet Nam: Lao Cai (where Ta Phin is located), An Giang and Tien Giang (Agriterra, undated)

forest. The intention was for Colecto to implement the capacity building initiatives and development of the various tourism enterprises, and then market it themselves.

Agriterra has met with a number of problems however, primarily relating to their partner, Colecto.

“It is very difficult to set up solid sustainable benefit sharing systems. Colecto also does not believe a benefit sharing mechanism works in the Vietnamese village context. Colecto is also not the qualified party for partnership building with tourism companies because this is the responsibility of the provincial and local farmers unions due to legal or company structure considerations. If Colecto wants to develop itself as a tourist agency, and even as an agritourism expert, it will become very hard to compete with existing travel agents. Because the latter have experience in the very sensitive tourism business, which Colecto has not” (van der Meulen, 2010, p. 1).

Other concerns with Colecto include concerns over unclear roles and poor monitoring (van der Meulen, 2010). In the words of a government official,

“it is a very beautiful concept, I still think so, and am very committed to the idea. But the project itself I think is complete failure, because of the weakness of the Vietnamese side. The farmers union is very weak, and they assigned Colecto, which is the company under the union, to run the project, and this is wrong, because they know nothing about agriculture, or tourism” (Minh, state government official, pers. comm., 2010).

Problems identified in the discussion of the CIDA initiative also plague the Agriterra initiative – local travel agencies are increasingly avoiding Ta Phin due to the aggressive nature of handicraft sellers, and the condition of the homestays is not considered to be acceptable by tourist standards. Mattresses donated to homestay owners were quickly replaced with straw mattresses to avoid mould, and profits from tourism remain very low as homestays are the only source of income from tourists (van der Meulen, 2010). In

addition, locals are beginning to lose interest as what small amount of revenue is being generated is not equally distributed.

As a final note on Ta Phin, the most recent change in Ta Phin is the construction of a new handicraft market. Local residents and tour operators informed me that it was built by an international development agency, but at the time of writing no further details were known about the identity of the donor. Several resident women involved in handicraft production explained that it is unused, as they don't like the location on the outskirts of the village, where tourists rarely visit.



Figure 5: Unused new market, Ta Phin village, April 2010. (Photograph: K Huxford).

The open air design of the structure is also unsuitable as it does not keep out the persistent fog, which not only is cold and damp for the women but also reacts with the dyes they use in their fabrics. The women spoken to during my visit also criticised the inability to leave their handicraft products in the market overnight, as it is insecure. On my visit the market appeared an empty, forlorn figure. Certainly many questions arise over the construction of this market, and the decision making process involved in its creation.

Case study 3: Quan Ba and Caritas

In contrast to the previous two case studies, the Quan Ba CBT initiative is still in the early planning and implementation stages. Quan Ba district, in Ha Giang province is located approximately 300 kilometres north-west of Hanoi near the border with China. The area is mountainous and home to a number of different ethnic minority groups. Agriculture has traditionally been the main livelihood activity; however this is often a struggle against an unforgiving climate and poor soils (Mary, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010). There is a growing interest in Ha Giang as the next 'new' place for tourists to go (Minh, state government employee, pers. comm., 2010) to replace Sa Pa which many tour operators report is becoming 'spoilt.'

Caritas, an international Catholic development organisation, has worked in Ha Giang for many years. Caritas works in the three keys areas of emergency relief, sustainable development and peace building (Caritas, 2010). Caritas Switzerland has an office in Hanoi, and among their broader work on sustainable development in Ha Giang is a pro-poor tourism initiative based in Quan Ba district. A pilot tourism project was initiated in 2001, with the first (and only) tour occurring in 2004. There were a number of problems associated with the tourism model (Zaugg, 2008) which have resulted in the development of a new approach underway now.



Figure 6: Typical landscape in Quan Ba (Fattebert, 2009).

The major objectives are to contribute to infrastructure development, provide vocational training, and create a homestay model in one or two villages. Caritas intends to provide training workshops for host communities on hospitality skills, English or French language classes, entrepreneurship, and education on tourism opportunities and risks more generally. Proposed infrastructural improvements include sanitary facilities and material commodities such as blankets, mattresses and mosquito nets. There is no developed plan for training workshops on other tourism activities although the area has been identified as having potential in this regard (Fattebert, 2009).

Initially Participatory Rural Appraisal methods were carried out with potential host communities. Informal partnerships have been created with several tour operators, which has been a problematic exercise as many tour operators want to develop privately owned community lodges for tourists to be accommodated in (Mary, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010). To date, Caritas is still working through administrative procedures including establishing a Memorandum of Understanding with the local authorities. This MoU is experiencing some delays, in part due to the politically sensitive location of the district close to the Chinese border (Fattebert, 2009). These delays are impacting adversely on their informal partnerships with tour operators, who want to see progress. These delays are also felt by the local communities, who are anxious for “*some concrete activities*” to follow the planning (Mary, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010). Discussions with local authorities and community representatives are also still ongoing with regard to the setting up of a tourism management board and community fund system. Caritas intends to retain some control over the expenditure of this community fund (*ibid.*).

Case study 4: Pu Luong Nature Reserve and Fauna and Flora International

Fauna and Flora International (FFI) have been involved in Pu Luong Nature Reserve, Ba Thuoc District, Thanh Hoa Province since 2002. The Pu Luong Nature Reserve (PLNR) was established in 1999 and is located approximately 160 kilometres south-west of Hanoi. The area is characterised by “extensive areas of karst limestone, contains the largest remaining area of lowland limestone forest in Northern Vietnam, and is a globally important example

of karst ecology” (FFI, undated a). The majority of PLNR residents are from the Thai and Muong ethnic minorities (Hien, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010) and rely heavily on the reserve’s natural resources. The District is one of the poorest in northern Viet Nam.



Figure 7: Farm irrigation of rice paddy field in Pu Luong Nature Reserve (Source: www.phusontravel.com)

Traditionally a conservation-based NGO, FFI’s initial involvement in Pu Luong was through the Pu Luong-Cuc Phuong Limestone Landscape Conservation Project 2002-2009, working to create positive links between biodiversity and landscape conservation (FFI, undated a). Ecotourism was identified as a way of raising local incomes in the Pu Luong-Cuc Phuong area whilst achieving sustainable management of the region’s natural resources. The provincial government identified PLNR specifically as a priority for tourism development. Existing tourism activities in PLNR are based around trekking and homestays (FFI, undated b). The neighbouring district of Mai Chau has experienced a rapid boom in natural and cultural tourism, and is the base for tourist excursions into PLNR. Despite this boom at Mai Chau, in PLNR “tourism has failed to contribute significantly to local income generation and to poverty reduction...tour operators have captured the vast majority of the revenue and reduced the incentive of local communities to manage their natural resources sustainably” (FFI, undated a).

An Irish Aid funded initiative entitled “Building Community Institutions for the Development and Management of Pro-poor Nature-based Tourism in Pu Luong Nature

Reserve” is now being implemented seeking to rebalance the relationship between stakeholders to more effectively spread the benefits of tourism. FFI is the ‘project implementer’ of the two-year project, working alongside the principal local partner, the Pu Luong Nature Reserve (a government-directed organisation). The key objectives are to “to develop the human, institutional, and physical capacity for ecotourism development in PLNR that is socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable” (FFI, 2010), with the rationale expressed as follows:

“We wish to support different stakeholders in this area to develop tourism in a sustainable way. At the moment there are some different perspectives in terms of tourism development in this area, some people are very interested in tourism development but some are not. There’s some conflict and some differences in terms of conservation perspectives, so that’s why the project has a goal to effectively rebalance the relationship between the key stakeholders, including the local communities, tour operators, the Pu Luong Nature Reserve management board and the district authorities, in order to put in place a business model that allows more equitable and sustainable sharing of the tourism benefits. So that is the goal of the project.” (FFI employee, pers. comm., 2010).

Another objective is for FFI to acquire the skills and knowledge to be able to “replicate this model to other sites of high social and environmental importance in North Viet Nam” (FFI, 2010, p. 13).

Key achievements thus far include the completion of a Sustainable Tourism Development Plan for PLNR in 2009, following a series of participatory workshops attended by key stakeholders (FFI, 2010). A number of workshops were held to raise awareness of the natural and cultural values of the PLNR and teach basic ‘park ranger’ skills such as guiding and visitor interpretation. Three study tours were undertaken to show stakeholders other ecotourism sites. Eleven small grants were allocated to fund tourism facilities such as toilets and clean water systems.

FFI's mid-term review details a number of challenges for implementing the Plan, including a three month delay in obtaining permission for the project from the Thanh Hoa Provincial government. The area of institutional capacity building is proving to be challenging, particularly due to the short time frame of the project. Tourism management boards have been set up in a number of villages and some strategic planning sessions have been held, however capacity building activities such as management training are pending awaiting the establishment of several stakeholder institutions such as a community-based ecotourism association (FFI, 2010). The review also concluded that:

“It is recognized that community-based eco-tourism is a kind of business. The evaluation mission found a high demand for capacity building activities from stakeholders, especially the local communities. The project faces considerable challenges because the expectations of stakeholders have been high compared to what the project can support during the project period.” (FFI, 2010).

The Pu Luong Nature Reserve case study is an example of a development agency getting involved in existing tourism activities rather than being involved right at the initial implementation stage. Clearly this has its difficulties due to tensions between stakeholders over equitable sharing of tourism benefits, and the challenge of working with disillusioned stakeholders. The PLNR does have what case study three in Quan Ba doesn't, which is excellent links to existing tourism markets and tourist movements.

Case study 5: Chieng Yen, SNV and the Responsible Travel Club

The Responsible Travel Club (RTC) was formed in 2009 by seven tour operators based in Hanoi, with the support of SNV. The RTC “aims to promote and facilitate responsible tourism and equitable/fair business environment for all members” (RTC, undated) and according to the current president of the club, *“the biggest goal we are trying to achieve is to make tourism growth sustainable, you know, in a sustainable way. We don't want to work separately; we want to team up as a team, which will be working together to the same purpose”* (RTC president, pers. comm., 2010).

The first CBT initiative involving the RTC is the Chieng Yen CBT initiative. Chieng Yen commune contains a number of villages in a mountainous area approximately 150km north-west of Hanoi. The tourism product is based around homestays, provision of food, tour guide services, cultural performances, trekking and motorcycle touring opportunities. The RTC contributed funds towards training (Thao, pers. comm., 2010) and is involved in some marketing. However several members of the RTC identified that tour operators were not involved in the planning, which limited the effectiveness of their input. For example, one tour operator has criticised SNV for including too many villages in their Chieng Yen initiative and suggested that this will only create disillusionment among those households who are expecting to benefit from tourism in the short term (Jeff, Hanoi tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).



Figure 8 (left): Cultural performance in Chieng Yen commune. (Photograph: Nick Ross)

Figure 9 (right): Villagers planting rice in Chieng Yen commune. (Photograph: Nick Ross)

The RTC is seen an important link in the exit strategy for SNV's involvement in Chieng Yen: *"the exit strategy is sort of passing on every day management to that Responsible Travel Club, so they take ownership, they can invest in it, but they'll get the economic dividends as well, so you are giving them reason to look at it"* (John, development agency employee, pers comm., 2010). Unfortunately this project is yet to benefit the host villages, with very few visitors to the commune thus far (RTC member, pers. comm., 2010). The global economic crisis is being blamed by tour operators for their inability to bring tourists to Chieng Yen and it is likely to be years before conclusions can be drawn over the realisation of Chieng Yen's CBT potential.

Tourism Translations: towards an actor-network of development-assisted CBT

With the above case studies providing some contextual background on development assistance in CBT in Viet Nam, the remainder of the chapter now threads these case studies into an exploratory discussion on the process of building CBT actor-networks. Creating a CBT initiative with development agency assistance involves a *translation* process (Callon, 1986a), which is essentially the relational process of building actor-networks from entities (van der Duim, 2007). Studies of translations require researchers to examine the *hows* of the social, which includes examinations of how networks are stabilised and made durable, or conversely destabilised and renegotiated. This contrasts with traditional sociology which is more interested in the *whys* of the social, grounding 'its explanations in somewhat stable agents or frameworks' (Law, 2009, p. 148). Studying translation involves paying attention to how an actor-network came to be, who and what the actor-network involves, how it is maintained (or destabilised, as the case may be), and what competing networks may influence the performance of an actor-network (Rodger et al., 2009).

The concept of translation emerged from Latour's (1983) study of Louis Pasteur's scientific work. In following Pasteur's study of anthrax disease, Latour highlighted the ways in which Pasteur enlisted outsiders into his study, and how Pasteur convinced others that it was his ideas that would solve the problem of the disease (Latour, 1983; Rodger et al., 2009). Michel Callon then coined the term translation, building on Latour's work to introduce the concept of four phases of translation, which he developed in his seminal study of scallop fishing in St Brieuc Bay, north-west France (1986b). The first phase of translation, *problematization*, defines the nature of the problem and identifies the actors involved (human and non-human). It usually involves a principal actor defining a problem in such a way that other actors accept this definition of the problem. The second phase, *interessement*, refers to the actions and strategies taken by the principal actor to ensure other actors accept their proposed solution to the problem, and the specific roles assigned to them by the principal actor. In attempting to achieve interessement, an actor may try to make themselves, or a part of their plan an '*obligatory point of passage*' Callon (1986b) where shared understandings (about a solution for example) are reached between actors

(Davies, 2003). *Enrolment*, the third phase, occurs if *interessement* is successful, and other actors accept the roles and identities defined for them by the principal actor(s). Enrolment is “the group of multilateral negotiations, trials of strength and tricks that accompany the *interessements* and enable them to succeed” (Callon, 1986b, p. 211). *Mobilisation*, the final phase, is the successful translation of a network of entities. This phase may never be reached, and is by no means a stable or fixed position. In many cases, a change will force a return to the earlier stages of translation.

To illustrate the applied use of Callon’s phases of translation, it is helpful to understand his scallops study (1986b). The research followed three marine biologists trying to develop a conservation strategy for a declining scallop population. Callon structured his account of the actor-network around the four stages of translation. In the first stage, *problematization*, the scientists sought to identify the problem (declining scallop stocks) for other actors. The scientists tried to convince other actors that their proposed solutions – sinking artificial ‘collectors’ on which scallop larvae could attach, grow without predation and later be harvested (Ginn, 2005, p. 35) - satisfied the best interests of fishermen, scallops, and scientists. The second stage, *interessement*, involved actions taken by the scientists to impose and stabilise the identity of the other actors, and create alliances. In this way, the scientists were seeking to ensure that their knowledge was an *obligatory passage point* in the final solution. *Interessement* achieves *enrolment*, the third phase, if it is successful. Thus enrolled scallops would attach to the collectors, and fishermen would support the scientists’ actions without resistance. *Mobilisation*, the final stage, occurs when all actors play their assigned roles in the actor-network. In St Brieuc Bay, enrolment and mobilisation were not fully achieved as the scallops failed to attach to the collectors consistently, and those that did were prematurely removed by fishermen impatient with the three year wait imposed by the scientists.

As Callon’s scallops study demonstrates, building an actor-network is not a simple process. Using the phases of translation as a methodological and theoretical approach highlights that interactions between actors are continually being performed and are constantly changing (van der Duim & Caalders, 2008). This helps us to avoid the risk of characterising development assistance in CBT as a series of simple dichotomous manoeuvres (Cupples, forthcoming). A reading of actor-network theory also reminds us that

when starting out, we must avoid making assumptions that assign particular significance to any particular actor or relationship. Researchers must not only focus on the activities of one key actor (such as development agencies), but on their interaction with other actors in the actor-network (Cupples, forthcoming; Latham, 2002).

Other authors have found Callon's translation process useful for analysis (see for example, Rodger et al., 2009; Saarki & Heikkinen, 2010; van der Duim & Caalders, 2008), and their work informs this research, which is essentially a study of the translations in development-assisted community-based tourism actor-networks in Viet Nam. Tracing the translations requires that attention is paid to how the network was established, how the associations between actors occurred, and how the roles and functions of all actors (human and non-human) are attributed or distributed, and maintained (van der Duim, 2007; Rodger et al., 2009).

My interpretation of the translation process of an actor-network is informed by what Foucault termed 'government,' referring to the attempt to shape human conduct by calculated means, for the well-being of a population (Li, 2007). According to Li, "government operates by educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs. It sets conditions, 'artificially so arranging things so that people, following only their own self-interest, *will do as they ought*' (2007, p. 5, emphasis in original). Furthermore, "when power operates at a distance, people are not necessarily aware of how their conduct is being conducted or why, so the question of consent does not arise" (Li, 2007, p. 5). In tracing the translations of CBT actor-networks, the discussion in this chapter attempts to show the calculated means by which actors try to shape the conduct of others.

The remainder of this chapter uses Callon's phases of translation (1986b) to structure an account of actors and the material heterogeneous practices and ordering that take place to form CBT actor-network(s) in northern Viet Nam (Johannesson, 2005). With a focus on homestay tourism, the chapter explores how and why homestay tourism is established and by whom, the various roles attributed to different actors, the negotiations involved to get the key actors in agreement and how the various actors make sense of their roles. It is important to reiterate that translation is an ongoing process, and the following section opens up some of the spaces where ordering is contested and where translation fails in

some circumstances (Rodger et al., 2009). It also introduces some of the discourses that act to stabilise or destabilise the actor-network, which will be further analysed in chapter four.

Problematiation

The first of Callon's phases of translation is *problematiation*, where 'a project tries to become indispensable to other actors by defining the nature and the problems of the latter and then suggesting that these can be resolved by following the path of action suggested by the project' (van der Duim & Caalders, 2008, p. 116). Problematiation for CBT actor-network(s) in north-western Viet Nam involves development agencies (sometimes with the local authorities) trying to implement community-based tourism as a way to reduce poverty in rural villages. The key human actors include development agencies, tour operators, national, district and provincial government authorities, and people living in the host communities. The key non-human actors are the houses belonging to people in the host villages, which function as a homestay for guests to stay overnight. Other important non-human actors include the mattresses, blankets and mosquito nets that are considered essential components of a homestay, and the terraced rice paddies and animals (chickens, pigs and buffalo) that contribute to the agricultural landscape and tourist experience. Tourists are, of course, an important feature of the network, however studying the motives and practices of tourists is a specialised field in itself that is beyond the scope of this research. Tourists are treated here as an emergent effect (van der Duim & Caalders, 2008) if the CBT network mobilises. This section explores the actions of the key human actors as they attempt to identify problems that CBT might solve, and how.

Development agencies

"The role of the INGO is usually that of a consultant and facilitator that provides local people with information, skills training, networking opportunities, and start-up capital with the ultimate goal of community empowerment" (Stevens, 2010, p. 452).

The above quotation captures how development agencies perceive their role in CBT initiatives. With poverty alleviation as the goal and CBT as the vehicle, the problematiation

phase sees development agencies defining the 'problem' of how and why to initiate CBT in particular places, and then "defining the issue in such a compelling way it ensures the other actors accept their definition of the problem" (Rodger et al., 2009, p. 652).

Development agencies enter the translation process earlier than the label of 'facilitator' indicates, being involved right from the beginning during the site identification and design of the project scope. How and why development agencies work in specific geographical locations is complicated, with intervention or assistance often occurring in particular locations due to complex historical-political associations (Bebbington, 2004). A full analysis of the spatialities of development assistance in CBT is beyond the scope of this research. However in general, development assistance often occurs in specific locations at the request of local government, as exemplified by SNV and the RTC: "*we don't go in and operate unless we have permission and a request from the provincial government*" (John, development agency employee, *pers comm.*, 2010), "*they [SNV] had to work with the local authorities. And the local authorities point out where is a good place, 'that's the village Chieng Yen, I want you to come in and see its potential'*" (Thao, tour operator, *pers. comm.*, 2010). Sometimes development assistance occurs as an attempt to rectify widespread discontent with existing tourism patterns and impacts, as seen in FFI's work in Pu Luong Nature Reserve (Hien, development agency employee, *pers comm.*, 2010). Development assistance has also been motivated by the desire to spread the benefits of existing tourism activities more widely, as exemplified in numerous initiatives around Sa Pa District.

Community-based tourism in Viet Nam's north-west region has become almost synonymous with homestays. The house, a non-human actor, is therefore particularly important to the actor-network²³. Of all the development agencies interviewed, homestays are the first, and sometimes only type of CBT 'product' to be developed, primarily because '*that was seen as the best and easiest type of tourism to start*' (Phuong, development agency employee, *pers. comm.*, 2010). Despite accumulating research concluding that supplementary activities for tourists to participate in are crucial to the long term success of CBT initiatives (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009), the development agencies interviewed focused

²³ The discourses circulating around CBT and normalising assumptions about homestays will be analysed in chapter four.

little attention on supplementary activities for tourists to partake in. More than one tourism consultant interviewed cynically referred to 'community-based hospitality' as being a more appropriate term than CBT (Andrew, tourism consultant, pers. comm., 2010). Some development agencies have training and advice for establishing other tourism activities on their agenda but it is not a high priority, as illustrated by vague responses to my questions about supplementary activities.

All development agencies interviewed referred to capacity building as one of their important functions, which is consistent with the approach of many aid and development agencies across Viet Nam (Ha, 2001). This occurs across multiple scales; including sessions for local government staff, tour operators, and local communities to raise awareness about CBT, form steering groups, undertake master-planning, and develop management strategies. Other activities undertaken by development agencies unrelated to specific initiatives include the formation in 2007 of the Viet Nam Community-based Tourism Network (VCBTN) by SNV. The VCBTN has recently reactivated and is intended to be a useful resource for raising awareness of CBT, improving the quality of CBT development, promoting policy dialogue with government agencies, and providing a forum for practitioners to share knowledge and discuss issues specific to Viet Nam (VUFO-NGO Centre, undated).

Government

At the national level tourism is governed by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, under the department of the Viet Nam National Administration of Tourism (VNAT). Based in Hanoi, the VNAT has "full control in terms of business development, planning, public relations, personnel training, research, instructing and implementing the policies and other regulations of the tourism sector" (Vietnam Cultural Profile, undated). Within the VNAT is the Institute of Tourism Development and Research (ITDR), who undertake research on behalf of the VNAT in addition to providing advice and consultancy services. The government's perspective on tourism is decidedly economically focussed, although they do acknowledge the potential for poverty alleviation through tourism:

“It is now officially recognised by the government that tourism is very important for poverty reduction and economic restructuring, meaning before our economic structure pattern was more like agriculture than industry. Then came the services, and commerce. So the government would like to introduce more balance, and a more modern structure for the economy, by reducing agriculture and increasing the state of industry, commerce and services, which is the umbrella of the tourism industry.” (Minh, government official, pers. comm., 2010).

Burns (2004) argues that the role of government institutions is to ensure that tourism planning remains a subset of wider national development goals. There is some evidence of this occurring at the national level in Viet Nam, through the first Law on Tourism for example. The first Law on Tourism in Viet Nam came into effect in 2005, and is an example of governmental support for the potential of tourism to achieve poverty reduction. The Law on Tourism:

“contains specific chapters and articles providing local communities and individuals with enhanced opportunities to engage in tourism activities (planning, implementation, investment, management) and thereby be better positioned to receive a more equitable share of the benefits. Tourism developers are held to support local economies and employment (local artisans, handicraft producers and tour guides) and are urged to respect and conserve both natural and cultural heritage in their designs.” (SNV, undated [a])

The Law on Tourism provides an overarching framework, for which ‘under laws’ are now being formulated to provide enforceable regulations (Redman, 2009; SNV, undated [a]).

The government has also initiated a number of other regulatory changes to link tourism with poverty reduction and the sustainability agenda. Sustainable development and poverty reduction are included in the mandate of a revised National Tourism Master Plan, and a policy for the “Socialization of Tourism” has committed the government to spread tourism benefits more widely through the population (Hainsworth, 2008). A Research and Action

Master Plan is also currently being developed by the VNAT specifically on community-based tourism (Minh, government official, *pers comm.* 2010). Despite these proactive measures at the national level, interview material indicates that the capacity and political incentives for provincial and district governments to support CBT and pro-poor approaches are very weak. Like other examples around the globe, policy and regulatory frameworks need to be strong enough to ensure the rhetoric of tourism for poverty alleviation, and tourism for development actually occurs on the ground (Scheyvens, 2007).

Tour operators

To put it simply, tour operators generally bring the tourists. Global and local discourses around sustainability, sustainable tourism and responsible tourism all inform the activities of tour operators, and thus contribute to the actor-network. In particular, tour operators are increasingly looking to make their businesses more 'responsible' in response to perceived tourist demands. As specialists in the field of tourism, tour operators have a great knowledge of market linkages and 'what tourists want.' There is great potential to utilise this vital knowledge both in the planning stages of CBT initiatives and to provide training for host communities in key areas such as cooking for tourists, hygiene and sanitation, key facilities, basic English phrases, and tour guiding. Tour operators are also considered, both in the literature and in practice, to be integral to effective marketing of tourism initiatives.

As identified in chapter one, a key reason for failure of CBT initiatives has been due to issues around commercial viability. Goodwin & Santilli's (2009) study of the success factors of 15 CBT initiatives confirms that successful CBT initiatives rely on strong market linkages to ensure economic sustainability. Research on the private sector role in anti-poverty tourism is critically needed, particularly on ways in which planners of pro-poor tourism initiatives can effectively attract and work with the private sector (Zhao & Ritchie, 2007). Development agencies working in north-western Viet Nam are increasing efforts to enrol and mobilise tour operators within the CBT actor-network, however evidence of involvement of tour operators in the early planning stages is low. The private sector has typically only become involved once the homestays are ready to receive guests. Development agencies have facilitated the promotion of the CBT initiatives and in some instances have undertaken promotional activities themselves, such as in Chieng Yen (see

case study 5). Again, the lack of attention to training and advice for the development of supplementary CBT activities is notable. It is also noted that some of the larger tour operators are looking to establish private community lodges in order to gain better quality control of the product, and the ability to have exclusive use of the facilities for their clients (Jeff, tour operator, *pers comm.*, 2010). Community lodges are also perceived to be a remedy to conflict within villages that occurs when the profits from tourism are not shared equally (Hanoi tour operator, *pers. comm.*, 2010). That some tour operators would prefer to facilitate the establishment of community lodges is particularly problematic for development agencies in creating effective partnerships.

Local communities and individuals

Poverty alleviation in rural communities is the major objective for development agencies. With tourism seen as a suitable method to achieve this, mobilisation of these communities into a CBT actor-network is therefore the desired end state. Local communities are an interesting element in the translation process; they are the subject of the entire CBT actor-network, yet they are perceived as the least dynamic component of the network building as will be seen in chapter four.

In the case studies outlined earlier in the chapter, the majority of inhabitants of host communities are rice farmers or handicraft weavers with no prior experience in tourism. Local people interviewed all specified that they want to be involved in tourism, yet other sources confirmed that in many cases disillusionment with tourism is also causing indifference and conflict (Jeff, tour operator, *pers. comm.*, 2010; Hien, development agency employee, *pers. comm.*, 2010). Host communities are perceived as very passive and lacking knowledge about the business of tourism. This homogenous identity of the host communities is created by other actors such as development agencies, tour operators and government officials and is integral to the problematisation of CBT.

The development problematic

Development studies literature refers to the 'development problematic' which has interesting parallels with Callon's phase of *problematization*. In his seminal text,

postdevelopment scholar Escobar (1995a) describes how poverty has become an organising concept since the end of World War II, resulting in the construction of a 'Third World.' The emergence of a hegemonic development discourse is expanded further in chapter four. To summarise here, Escobar's perspective considers that development intervention is justified through the creation of abnormalities, such as 'underdeveloped' or 'poor' which require treatment and reformation. The development discourse fostered a way of conceiving of social life as a technical problem (Escobar, 1995a; Ferguson, 1994), requiring solutions that are found in the 'tools' of development, such as science, technology, planning and international organisations. According to Escobar (1995a), the hegemonic development discourse portrays these tools as neutral, desirable, and universally applicable, a process that Ferguson (1994) identifies as a means by which poverty and the power of the state are depoliticised. In creating and maintaining development as a technical problem, "development had to rely on the production of knowledge that could produce a scientific picture of a country's social and economic problems and resources" (Escobar, 1995a, p. 37). The need for particular types of knowledge production in order to reinforce the rationale for development has become the domain of various institutions and 'experts' who have been attributed the moral, professional and legal authority to identify subjects, define strategies and produce a 'regime of truth' about others (*ibid.*, p. 41-45). Here lies a politics of knowledge, a key theme throughout this thesis.

Just as Escobar (1995a) and Ferguson's (1994) 'development' is a process of identifying problems for which solutions have to be found, Callon's *problematization* has already been identified earlier as a process where "a project tries to become indispensable to other actors by defining the nature and the problems of the latter and then suggesting that these can be resolved by following the path of action suggested by the project" (van der Duim & Caalders, 2008, p. 116). The parallels between Escobar and Ferguson's concepts of development with ANT's translation process will become increasingly obvious throughout the discussion in chapters three, four and five of this thesis. However, in linking the 'development problematic' with the *problematization* (and translation in general) of CBT actor-networks, we must be careful to avoid making assumptions that make the intentions of powerful actors the centre of an investigation. As Ferguson puts it,

“when we deal with planned interventions by powerful parties, however, it is tempting to see in the discourse and intentions of such parties the logic that defines the train of events. Such a vein, however, inevitably misrepresents the complexities of the involvement of intentionality with events. Intentions, even of powerful actors or interests, are only the visible parts of a much larger mechanism through which structures are actually produced, reproduced and transformed” (1994, p. 276).

Thus it is hoped that in using an ANT approach to follow the translation(s) of development-assisted CBT initiatives, we may heed Ferguson’s warning, and gain new insights into the complex factors that interconnect with the intentions of key actors (such as development agencies) to produce agency and transformation from material relations between actors.

Summary of Problematisation Phase

Development-assisted CBT actor-networks in north-western Viet Nam are a process where development agencies or local authorities, working both in tandem and/or separately, attempt to define the nature and problems of host communities (poverty among ethnic minority communities), suggesting a solution to resolve this problem (community-based tourism, focused on the provision of homestays) via a path of action promoted by the development agency (training workshops, community management boards, and benefit sharing mechanisms). The major advocate for a CBT initiative, usually a development agency and sometimes the local authorities, attempts to assign specific roles to other actors. As we have seen in the example of tour operators, getting other actors to accept their roles is not a straight-forward process and some negotiation may be required. I now turn to the *interessement* phase to identify some of the strategies used by principal actors to advance their initial problematisation and convince other actors to subscribe to their agenda.

Interessement

“Each entity enlisted by the problematisation can submit to being integrated into the initial plan, or inversely, refuse the transaction by defining its

identity, its goals, projects, orientations, motivations, or interests in another manner” (Callon, 1986b, p. 207).

Callon’s second phase of translation, *interessement*, involves the methods or actions by which an entity (such as development agencies) “attempts to impose and stabilize the identity of the other actors it defines through its problematisation” (Callon, 1986b, p. 208). This represents a stage upon which various actors can advance their particular priorities on other actors, and where other possibilities are hidden (Rodger et al., 2009). It is essentially about getting the actors interested in the ‘project,’ using an unlimited range of strategies and devices. In the context of CBT translations, *interessement* involves a raft of measures primarily initiated by local authorities and development agencies to engage host communities and tour operators; which of course are only sometimes successful. A CBT initiative might fail at this stage, if the project meets with passivity for example. In attempting to achieve *interessement*, an actor may try to make themselves, or a part of their plan an ‘*obligatory point of passage*’ Callon (1986b) which refers to points in the network where shared understandings are reached (Davies, 2003). In the example of CBT, an obligatory point of passage would be the shared understanding and acceptance that homestays are the best method of establishing community-based tourism in a community.

The process of *interessement* has close links to what Foucault termed ‘government,’ as introduced in chapter two. According to Li, Foucault’s ‘government’

“operates by educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs. It sets conditions, artificially arranging things so that people, following only their own self-interest, *will do as they ought*” (2007, p. 5, emphasis in original).

Furthermore, “when power operates as a distance, people are not necessarily aware of how their conduct is being conducted or why, so the question of consent does not arise” (Li, 2007, p. 5). This section entitled ‘*interessement*’ attempts to show the calculated means by which actors try to shape the conduct of others in order to enrol them in the CBT actor-network. This section is structured around several key processes that are integral to the

interessement phase – governance and regulatory measures, participatory processes, and involvement of the private sector.

Governance

The legislative and regulatory initiatives discussed in the problematisation section indicate that the government is open to the idea of tourism *for* development, and using CBT as an approach for poverty reduction. This is therefore an opportune time for development agencies to enrol governmental actors in the CBT actor-network. Interessement of the state government is relatively straight forward in Viet Nam, but less so at the provincial and district levels. Attempted interessement of development agencies by government authorities also occurs, on the occasions when local authorities seek to bolster economic opportunities of a particular commune through tourism.

In practical terms, the provincial and district governments tightly control tourism in Viet Nam. Homestay tourism cannot develop unless permission has been granted by the Provincial People’s Committee for the village to host visitors overnight. These decisions are influenced by political histories of the village, as illustrated through the following quotes from two development agency employees and a tour operator respectively:

“In Ta Phin, when we came there at first, they were not allowed to welcome guests, or let them sleep in the village, because in the past there were some conflicts between two ethnic groups living there, the Red Dzao people and the Hmong people. So the local authorities thought that it was not safe for tourists to stay overnight there. But when we came there the people there lived very peacefully, they had no conflicts at all, so we tried our best to train them and on the other side we had to pursue the local authority to issue some kind of certification for them, so that the tourists can stay overnight. The local authorities are very conservative. We had to invite the province authority to come there and evaluate with us, make assessments and everything, and after that in a big conference of the Lao Cai province the Premier of the province said ok, Ta Phin is very good for tourists to overnight, so the local authorities

decided to let tourists overnight in the village” (Phuong, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010).

“The local government in Sa Pa said ‘wait here, I will get approval for you to go and deliver the training in the village’ and he never came back, despite her calls. And what that was about was fear of missionaries going into communities, and this is the kind of position that the state takes with regard to foreigners going into communities” (Peter, development agency employee²⁴, pers. comm., 2010).

The local government might be thinking, ‘how is it going to benefit me?’ And if the local communities are not in line with the political structure of this country, the local government will say no, you can’t go there. We don’t want you there. We don’t really want these people to benefit in any way. So it’s a sort of punishment” (Simon, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).

However there is a sense among some stakeholders that governmental administrative procedures have eased. For example, *“you know this generation of leaders in general are less conservative, they are willing to listen to the voice from business, which was very rare in the past, from ten years ago” (Sinh, Sa Pa tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).* Another Sa Pa based businessman with a tour agency office and restaurant in Sa Pa town considers that it is *“very easy, we can get the permit, to open the agency down there, and to open the restaurant, it’s quite easy to get a permit, before it’s not easy at all to get a permit in my home town, but now very easy” (Xuan, Sa Pa tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).* However the same tour operator confirmed that getting a permit to allow tourists to stay overnight in villages surrounding Sa Pa town remains very difficult: *“we cannot send our customers stay wherever we want, just only a few places you can stay...the rest you cannot sleep over there, because we cannot buy the permit from the government.”* This suggests that there may be inequalities in

²⁴²⁴ The interview participant’s organisation has no religious affiliations.

the level of government scrutiny given to tourism initiatives of the private sector in Kinh²⁵ dominant towns (such as Sa Pa town), and in ethnic minority villages in the same district.

The varied responses of interview participants indicate that local government departments are extremely variable in their support for tourism and their understandings of CBT as an approach. In addition to the uncertainty surrounding gaining permits for new homestay locations, there is also uncertainty over the cost that local governments will extract: *“They sometimes can be easy to approach, but sometimes they are not. Yeah, they are not that familiar with tour operators, and they can say ‘ok you can come there but you have to pay fee fee fee, pay pay pay’, so it’s kind of like, I really want to go to that village but I don’t feel like paying something which is nonsense”* (Thao, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010). The typical passivity of local authorities in terms of tourism promotion is also a frustration (Thao, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010; John, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010), and it puts more pressure on development agencies to either undertake some marketing themselves as SNV is currently attempting with Chieng Yen, and elevates the importance of effective partnerships with private tour operators. Development agencies perceive that apparent passivity of local authorities often stems from a lack of understanding and education about tourism processes in general, and specifically about why and how to implement successful CBT initiatives²⁶.

This discussion thus shows that when planning new development-assisted CBT homestay initiatives, the local government has the choice to involve some communities and not others. The state is trying, through regulations, to make themselves an obligatory point of passage (Callon, 1986b). The uncertainty and unpredictability surrounding governmental responses demonstrates how the translation of actor-networks is a continual performance that is only sometimes successful. Here at this crucial phase, an actor (local government for example) can “refuse the transaction by defining its identity, its goals, projects, orientations, motivations, or interests in another manner” (Callon, 1986b, p. 207). In the example of the local government denying an application for a village to operate homestays, interestment

²⁵ *Kinh* is the term for the Vietnamese ethnic majority, making up approximately 87% of the population of Viet Nam.

²⁶ SNV in particular are working in capacity building in this area now.

is unsuccessful, as the attempt of the development agency to enrol the local government into their network has failed. It is important to note however the translation process in CBT is never linear, and is not always a process of development agencies trying to enrol the state and the host community. Rather, sometimes it is the provincial government trying to attract the support of a development agency that forms the basis of a translation. Agency emerging from actor-networks also creates spaces where the government is occasionally bypassed in such actor-networks, as is discussed in chapter five.

Participation and decision making

Strategic planning for a CBT initiative involves making choices about the nature of the assistance, and the type of tourism. The wealth of literature addressing best practice for public participation in decision-making processes would suggest that consultation should occur prior to any decision about tourism as a tool for development of a particular community (among the expansive literature on participatory methods in development see for example Chambers 1983, 1992, 1997; Cooke & Kothari, 2001a; Hickey & Mohan, 2004). An in-depth study of community participation in CBT was beyond the scope of this thesis but would contribute importantly to the literature which currently demonstrates that implementing effective community participation in decision making in Viet Nam is complex and messy at best (Catford, 2006; Stevens, 2010). It would also be useful to investigate assertions within the literature that in CBT “the community is co-opted into supporting tourism through an illusion of power sharing but they are not empowered to reject tourism as a development option” (Blackstock, 2005, p. 41) and “when communities are invited to participate, it is usually only in the implementation of ecotourism projects, rather than in shaping the development agenda behind them, and hence real choices may be narrowly defined” (Butcher, 2007, p. 62). From interview material it is clear that often development agencies enter the CBT fray *after* key decisions have been made by local government about how development should occur in the area. It is also clear that local communities generally enter after further decisions (or strong expressions of intent) are made about how tourism might occur. It is unlikely that opportunities are available for communities to discuss alternatives to tourism, or alternatives to the type of tourism initiatives put forward for

debate²⁷. This stage is therefore an example of actors, both the provincial government and development agencies, prioritising their agenda and their knowledge over that of other actors as part of the interessement phase.

Reports on the activities of NGOs in Viet Nam lament the ongoing difficulty in reaching (or enrolling) the poorest of the poor in Viet Nam (Dang, 2009; Ha, 2001), which is a challenge for NGOs more generally (Farrington & Bebbington, 1993). This challenge also applies to development assistance for tourism in Viet Nam, as the following quote illustrates: *“You rarely ever get to work with the poorest of the poor, because they are almost impossible to do something for, so you normally have to take it a step up”* (John, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010). One reason for this that was raised during interviews is that many of the poorest people in north-west Viet Nam don’t speak Vietnamese, the language of all CBT related training sessions. The inability to achieve interessement with the most marginalised and disadvantaged people in north-west Viet Nam is therefore a function of the interessement strategies used, whilst at the same time the quote above suggests that the ‘poorest of the poor’ are not an entity that is sought to be enlisted in the problematisation. This is a dilemma facing many development agencies in Viet Nam (Asian Development Bank, 2002).

Another challenge for development agencies is timeliness, throughout all aspects of CBT initiatives. Timeliness is crucial in strategic planning. Timeliness influences the success of collaboration with tour operators. Poor timeliness creates disillusionment among host communities if there is unexpected delay or absence of tourists, as articulated by a tour operator: *“the first clients sometimes take a long time, and the local people very quickly lose faith in the project. And in Pu Luong that’s what has happened, they said ok now we are here for four or five years about a tourism project and some families they never saw a tourist yet”* (Jeff, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010). It also takes time to establish effective relationships between actors, relationships that are hindered by the high turnover of both development agency staff and government staff (for example see Mahanty et al., 2009). In the context of

²⁷ The politicised nature of participatory discourses is discussed further in chapter four.

an actor-network, timeliness is important to ensure the linking of actors together long enough for interessement to occur.

Involving the private sector

Tour operators have mixed views on the role of development agencies in CBT initiatives. Although it appears to be fairly well understood that development agencies don't necessarily have a lot of funds to invest directly in CBT initiatives, the private and state sectors tend to view development agencies as having good access to funds through contacts with international donors. The following quote expresses this opinion:

“And another thing is funding, they [development agencies] can be a good middle man to call on for funding. Of course they do have some funds but they are very small, but they can call for funding from overseas, from some of the others that support the process of development of CBT.” (Thao, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).

Some tour operators were critical of development agencies for their lack of experience in developing tourism, and pointed to a number of unsuccessful examples in Viet Nam, for example *“I find it strange because they are sure of nothing about tourism, but they still do it... [development agency] is a bit on the wrong way because they develop something without being sure that they will have some clients”* (Jeff, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010). A Vietnamese tourism consultant also agreed with this, *“I think the first thing for the NGO to have is good experience in CBT”* (Danh, pers. comm., 2010). Criticism was also directed at development agencies for not collaborating with the private sector early enough, for example, *“they made a mistake of just developing something and not collaborating from the beginning enough with the tourism company”* (Jeff, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010). This issue clearly demonstrates the contestable definition and negotiation of roles in the CBT actor-network.

The criticisms above provide clues for understanding why interessement may fail in some cases. Despite the criticism, all tour operators interviewed agreed that some form of partnership between the development agency and tour operator(s) is required to develop a

tourism initiative *and* have it become commercially viable. From interview material is clear that development agencies and the private sector realise their greatest strength is in working together, however partnerships of this nature are in their infancy in north-west Viet Nam, with successful examples to glean best practice information from yet to be identified. Case study five about SNV's work in Chieng Yen commune is illustrative of a recent attempt to enrol the private sector in a CBT project through the Responsible Travel Club (RTC). The following quote indicates the consequences of overlooking the private sector:

"One of the problems I think of development projects, both with SNV in the past and other partners is that they are unrealistic, they do things that just aren't based on real market needs. You might find a nice village, and develop stuff, but if there is no market then it's pretty pointless. And it has probably created expectations that aren't going to be filled. So what we've done is worked with the seven Hanoi based tourism operators, which have formed a Responsible Travel Club, which is a separate project, although obviously linked in this case. We're working with them to both co-invest in it, with some of their own money, but also to provide that market feedback and say, 'do you think it's going to be viable?' So they've been involved, I guess over the last 12 months, in the project and helping to train and educate the local community" (John, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010)

This negotiation of roles is at the core of the translation process, crucial to the durability of a network (or otherwise). Interview findings suggest that there is an underlying uneasiness among development agencies about tour operators, which impacts on the capacity of development agencies to form effective partnerships. This uneasiness relates to the inability or unwillingness of tour operators to commit to a CBT initiative long-term, both in terms of time and financial investment, and is also reiterated by government representatives:

"We all know that [tour] companies think of feasibility. They invest of course, but in very few places, where they can see very clearly the quick profit. They don't invest for ten years of course, even five years they don't do, they invest for

six months. So I don't expect much from the private sector" (Minh, government official, pers. comm., 2010)

The perception that the business focus of tour operators drives all decisions leads to a sense among development agencies that tour operators are unpredictable. This view is partially supported by tour operators themselves, with one describing how tour operators continually balance a complex system of overlapping interests led by consumer demand, which does not allow for long term commitment to CBT initiatives (Thao, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010). The intersement phase of the CBT actor-network is clearly problematic at this point, as there are competing definitions of roles and reluctance to accept other actors' roles in the actor-network. This has implications for the durability of the network. For example, a tour operator may accept the role assigned to them by a development agency, perhaps being that of providing some advice and training for the host community, promoting the site and bringing tourists. However after a year or two the tour operator may find market demand is requiring their attention and resources be turned to another site of interest, and may then renegotiate their role in the actor-network or even exit the actor-network.

Some tour operators see themselves as the most appropriate representative of a CBT initiative to liaise with local government. As discussed above, there is a perception that local government is solely interested in the economic benefits of CBT initiatives rather than other developmental goals, and some tour operators believe themselves to be best qualified to discuss financial matters. This is a disputed matter however, with some other participants suggesting that the perceived neutrality of development agencies makes them better placed to enter into dialogue with government officials. There seems to be a quiet acceptance among tour operators that a united front of tour operators and development agencies to approach local government about tourism initiatives is the best option, as the following quote suggests:

"I think maybe it's easier for tour operators because we talk business, and they [local authorities] talk business, you talk with the local authorities about social and cultural preservation, natural, they don't care, they really don't care. They care about making money, and the tourism company talk more about

making money than the NGOs, but that's always the same, if we are together we are even stronger, because for the NGOs they have a kind of governmental power, so the best here would be, again the tourism company to talk business and the organisation be in behind to be a kind of guarantee that the project would be run correctly" (Jeff, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).

Summary of Interesement Phase

Clearly, the interesement phase of CBT actor-networks provides significant challenges to be overcome for CBT to establish successfully. The examples discussed above demonstrate various strategies and techniques used by different actors to enlist other actors, or conversely, resist the agenda of another actor. Key strategies include the employment of regulatory measures by the government to control where CBT occurs, attempting to make themselves an obligatory point of passage. Similarly, particular forms of knowledge and priorities for action are advanced through the exclusion of host communities from decision-making processes.

Tour operators are an interesting example of the ways in which a particular actor may resist interesement, negotiate their role and define their identity in a different manner. Although most tour operators are interested in being involved in CBT, development agencies currently struggle to advance their particular agenda and priorities and there is much distrust between tour operators, development agencies and local authorities. This is a crucial challenge to overcome for the successful translation of development-assisted CBT.

Enrolment

Callon's third phase of translation, *enrolment*, occurs if interesement is successful. "It designates the device by which a set of interrelated roles is defined and attributed to actors who accept them" (Callon, 1986b, p. 211). In other words, enrolment sees actors accept the roles and interests defined for them by other actors (Rodger et al., 2009). So what then, are the 'devices' and 'negotiations' that allow interesement of CBT actors to succeed?

To demonstrate the principle of symmetry in ANT, the homestay house is the most obvious example to use – both a non-human actor in CBT actor-networks and an interestment device. In developing homestay-based CBT, usually several houses are selected to be the initial (or pilot) homestays. Houses are sometimes chosen by the development agency (Phuong, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010), and in other cases the village is asked for volunteers, who usually include the village leader(s) as the following quote from a development agency employee demonstrates:

“We present the thing and usually they choose. They have a lot of hierarchy in the village, so the problem is usually the village leader will involve his brother, his cousin, etcetera” (Mary, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010).

Both methods usually result in the largest and most comfortable houses being chosen. This raises issues around exacerbating or reinforcing existing local hierarchies. The larger houses, belonging to the more wealthy members of the village need less investment in basic infrastructure. On occasion funding is provided to upgrade water supplies, and install a toilet or upgrade an existing one. The decision to offer their home as a homestay represents enrolment of a household and another step in the translation process.

Workshops are organised and facilitated by development agencies to enrol host communities in CBT. When local residents turn up, they are accepting the development agency’s role in the actor-network, as well as their own. The workshops cover training on subjects ranging from cooking, sanitation and hygiene, teaching of basic English phrases, and tour guiding. The workshops contribute to transformation among host communities, occurring at various scales from the individual, to the household and village level. Workshops are usually delivered in Vietnamese either by Vietnamese staff of the development agency, or by contractors such as staff from Hanoi universities or vocational training schools. Only occasionally is training provided for supplementary activities to attract tourists, such as the development of hot springs in Ban Ho village, and promotion of herbal baths in Ta Phin. Enrolled tour operators may participate in the trainings by assisting or delivering workshop sessions.

Tourism management boards are routinely set up by development agencies, to oversee the ongoing management of the tourism initiative. The acceptance of, and participation in the management board by local residents is illustrative of their acceptance of their role in the actor-network, and that of the development agency. This board also acts to oversee the distribution of the community fund, set up by development agencies to benefit the wider community. A proportion of funds from all overnight visitors to homestays, usually around 20%, is deposited in this communal fund for expenditure on village projects such as school maintenance. In the case studies of operating CBT initiatives, the local government usually has final approval over the fund expenditure; however Caritas indicated that they intend to retain some control over the community fund expenditure in the Quan Ba initiative they are currently working on (see case study 3).

To enrol provincial and district government officials into specific ways of thinking about sustainable tourism and community-based tourism, development agencies facilitate capacity building initiatives. These capacity building initiatives are plagued by challenges, such as government staff only able or willing to commit to short training sessions. This represents a stage where government officials may be partially enrolled, by turning up to capacity building workshops, yet simultaneously contesting the role of the development agency and their supposed superior knowledge by choosing the extent to which they participate. Other challenges to enrolment are associated with language barriers, and high staff turnover in both development and governmental organisations. In the latter case, government officials may be enrolled, and a CBT actor-network mobilised only until a change of staffing impacts on relationships and the period of interessement is returned to.

Summary of Enrolment Phase

These examples of enrolment in CBT translations again indicate the dynamic nature and complexity of enacting an actor-network. Some actors may never reach enrolment. Some may only be partially enrolled. Others may be enrolled for only short time. Exploring who is enrolled in any particular actor-network and why, as well as those who are not, requires scrutiny of the methods that allow interessement to succeed. From a practical perspective this provides insights into the drivers and barriers to effective development assistance in

CBT, but at a deeper level this reveals the power relations at play and the calculated ways in which actors attempt to shape conduct of others.

Mobilisation

The final phase of translation, *mobilisation*, occurs when there is a “successful translation of a network of entities” (van der Duim & Caalders, 2008, p. 118) and is dependent on enrolment being achieved and all the actors accepting their roles. In the CBT actor-network mobilisation is achieved when the homestays are physically ready for tourists, relevant individuals are trained to host guests, product promotion is underway, tour operators are able to bring tourists, and the benefit-sharing mechanisms are working successfully. Rodger et al. (2009, p. 657) remind us that “networks are only as stable as their alliances” and may collapse even after successful mobilisation (van der Duim & Caalders, 2008). As demonstrated in the case studies that opened this chapter, achieving mobilisation and a durable actor-network is fairly difficult and involves complex interlocking performances (Davies, 2003) of various actors, revealing numerous uncertain points in the network.

The important conceptual questions to be answered in achieving mobilisation are “who speaks in the name of whom? Who represents whom?” (Callon, 1986b, p. 214); for successful mobilisation of an actor-network relies on a principal actor(s) or alliances speaking on behalf of other actors in an actor-network without dissidence (Callon, 1986b; Saarki & Heikkinen, 2010). The practice of any actor speaking on behalf of another involves relations of power. As Pinch writes,

“this does not mean that speaking on behalf of others is undesirable, indeed advocacy for others would seem to be especially important in situations where the group in question lacks political power,” however “there is a danger of exaggerating different or reifying communities into some distant ‘other’” (1998, p. 568).

These questions of representation that Callon urges ANT researchers to consider are also the crux of scholarship canvassing power in development. Prompted by Li’s assertion that “the claim to expertise in optimizing the lives of others is a claim to power, one that merits careful scrutiny” (2007, p. 5), we can conclude that following the translations of CBT

provides an excellent methodological starting point for gaining new insights into the relations of power and representation that underpin CBT actor- networks.

It is also important to note that development agencies will always exit the actor-network when the fixed length of their project ceases, when funding is exhausted or when priorities change. The impact on the functioning of CBT actor-networks will vary immensely from initiative to initiative, but will always involve a reshuffling of remaining actors as power relations shift. From interviews with development agencies it is clear that their intention is for CBT actor-networks to reach mobilisation, with a satisfactory level of capacity building having been achieved such that development agencies can exit the actor-network without requiring a complete return of the actor-network to the interessement phase.

Overlapping actor-network(s)

It is important to note that ANT scholarship has moved beyond the conceptualisations of the 1980s of a single actor-network with a centre core, “washing away a single crucial assumption: that successful translation generates a single coordinated network and a single coherent reality” (Law, 2009, p. 152). Law (2009) and Davies (2003) demonstrate the influence of poststructuralist thought and non-representational theory on ANT: that there does not have to be a single rigid actor-network, rather there are multiple modes of ordering, complex translation processes, and multiple realities that may be both convergent and divergent. According to Davies (2003, p. 213):

“recent studies reveal the complexities, inconsistencies and ambiguities involved in the creation of networks, the multiple identities involved in the performance of networks, and the failure of networks to cohere. They attend to the patchwork of accounts that contest chronological narratives and indicate where alternative narratives might emerge.”

Chapter five explores some examples of the spaces where negotiation in an actor-network contributes to the failure of networks to cohere and alternative narratives emerge. The key point here is that actor-networks do not exist independently of other actor-networks; and an overlap between the actor-networks is often a site of negotiation or change.

The complexity and impacts of overlapping actor-networks can be seen in Government policy decisions on electricity generation in north-west Viet Nam. In Sa Pa district, 17 hydro-electric dams are under construction, with four in the immediate vicinity of Ban Ho village²⁸. The village has lost a large area of rice paddies to the construction zone, and the hot springs that were popular with tourists are now unusable (Ly, Ban Ho resident, pers. comm., 2010). These actions by one actor (government) result in changes to non-human actors (vegetation, topography, hot pools, rice paddies) which then compel another actor (tour operators) to perform differently by avoiding the village or passing through only. This is devastating the trekking and homestay industry, with one homestay owner noting that tourist homestay groups have dropped in frequency from at least five nights a week in 2007, to less than one group a month in 2010 (*ibid.*). A divergence and reconfiguration in the CBT actor-network has occurred as other villages are enrolled in the actor-network to accommodate the tourists overnight. Clearly change in one actor-network can have significant impacts for overlapping actor-networks. These impacts are often unpredictable, a contributing factor to the challenge of commercial viability in CBT.

Chapter summary

I now return to the quote that opened the chapter:

“Despite the presence and efforts of many agencies in assisting indigenous tourism enterprises, however, their longevity in operation is still not assured and they are likely to remain vulnerable in the future, situated as many are on the margins of an industry that is itself vulnerable to many influences” (Aramberri & Butler, 2005 in Butler & Hinch, 2007, p. 324).

This quote characterises the precarious nature and constant reconfiguration of many CBT actor-networks. Despite best efforts by development agencies to enrol other actors into their viewpoints, the actor-network remains complex, fragile and vulnerable due to the

²⁸ See case study one in chapter three.

unpredictable and unstable positioning of other actors, particularly tour operators and local government. The reconfiguration of translation processes within the CBT actor-network does not usually lead to the complete failure of the actor-network; however primary actors are forced into renewed periods of problematisation and interessement.

Using Callon's phases of translation to introduce the CBT actor-networks in north-western Viet Nam facilitates fairly specific and rarely explored understandings about tourism *for* development. It satisfies the wish to provide an introduction to the key actors (human and non-human), the nature of their interactions with each other, the current state of CBT in north-western Viet Nam, and the general objectives of a number of tourism *for* development initiatives – whilst applying a relational and empirical lens that asks 'how' and 'why' particular actor-networks are established. In tracing the forming and performance of relations, this approach makes it clear that the entities exist only through their network relations, and it is through these very relations that agency and power emerge. The next chapter explores how the shifting associations within CBT actor-networks and the relational effects of agency and power are mediated by particular discourses.

Chapter 4

The discursive space of CBT

Đi một ngày đàng, học một sàng khôn

A single day on the road...a whole basketful of wisdom²⁹.

Introduction

The previous chapter sought to map the actor-network of CBT in north-western Viet Nam. This was necessarily descriptive, being primarily concerned with identifying the key human and non-human actors that make up the actor-network, and the nature of the relationships between them. However, as Davies (2003, p. 209) reminds us, “this mapping of network modes is not enough. This is where case studies using actor-network theory risk ending up...for description to transform into explanation, it is essential to consider the traffic through this network; to follow the performative elements that allow it to hold together and become more durable” or more unstable as the case may be. The previous chapter’s application of the phases of translation to the CBT actor-network began an explanatory process, discussing how and why the actor-network was built in specific ways. Now we must look deeper for the transformations that the actors are undergoing, as actor-networks are always in action (Davies, 2003). This chapter begins to explore some of the transformations occurring within CBT actor-networks, and specifically how these are mediated by specific discourses.

Critical analyses of development discourse, many drawing on the work of Foucault, have multiplied in the wake of Ferguson’s (1994) and Escobar’s (1995a) critiques of development as a whole (Walker et al., 2008). Discourse analyses of development provide insight not only into the problems of development (as vast and contested as these may be) but also into the realm of possibilities for new understandings. As Cooper and Packard (1997 in Walker et al., 2008, p. 528) summarise it:

²⁹ Vietnamese proverb about the benefits of travel experiences, from Sa Pa tourism, (undated).

“The point is not to decide whether or not development discourse is truly hegemonic, but to examine projects of building and fracturing hegemonies: how financial, political, and discursive power was deployed, how such projects were contested within their own terms and through efforts to redefine the terrain of debate, and how one can find where the room to manoeuvre remains in international institutions and in the numerous sites where development initiatives encounter the complexity of particular social struggles.”

There are dozens of discursive themes circulating within the rhetoric and practice of tourism for development, and development assistance in tourism. Discourse can be understood as “a set of meanings embodied in metaphors, representations, images, narratives, and statements that advance a particular version of ‘the truth’ about objects, persons, events, and the relations between them” (Long, 2001, p. 51-52 in Bramwell, 2006). Understanding discursive power allows us to see how and why development interventions are ordered, understood and justified (McEwan, 2009).

Poststructuralist theorisations of discourse and discourse analysis inform this work. Key influences in this analysis are Derrida’s work on binary epistemologies and the need to deconstruct the dualistic presumptions of western philosophy, and Foucauldian perspectives on how particular discourses produce and maintain knowledge that is accepted as Truth³⁰ (Woodward et al., 2009). As Foucault puts it:

“Each society has its regime of truth, its ‘general politics’ of truths; that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true, the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; and the techniques and

³⁰ Foucault uses a capital “T” to denote Truths that are “interpreted as a category with the status of a universal, timeless quality” as opposed to regimes of truth that are specific to each society, “the specifics of which are fashioned by: the types of discourses deployed...” (Woodward et al., 2009, p. 401).

procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true” (1980, p. 131).

Discourse analysis is a useful tool for understanding the performative elements that explain how an actor-network is created and functions. As Davies (2003, p. 203) put it, “ANT treats representations as precariously stabilised orderings that jostle for space with other ways of ordering the world.” Therefore gaining an understanding of the key debates around development discourse, and an exploration of the dominant discourses circulating within CBT in Viet Nam will offer views into how actor-networks are stabilised or destabilised through discursive action. On the basis that “every discourse sets limits to its conditions of possibility so it cannot recognise certain kinds of realities” (Law, 2009, p. 149); this analysis of CBT discourses is an important step for recognising both the limitations and possibilities existing within actor-networks.

This chapter begins with a brief review of key theorists and literature on development as a discourse, then moves to a discussion of a number of key discursive themes that illustrate the regimes of truth around development assistance in CBT in Viet Nam. Underpinning the dominant discourses in CBT are the themes of knowledge, identity and power; around which this chapter is set out. Respecting the emphasis on heterogeneity in actor-network theory, this chapter attempts to deconstruct the homogenous identities that are created with CBT discourses, and explores how various actors, particularly development agencies, understand and justify their roles through discursive processes. This chapter builds on the previous chapter by showing how the translation process is mediated by discourses and demonstrating the power of discourse to ‘black box’ parts of an actor-network.

The discursive space of development

“What does it mean to say that development started to function as a discourse, that is, created a space in which only certain things could be said and even imagined? If discourse is the process through which social reality comes into being – if it is the articulation of knowledge and power, of the visible and the inexpressible – how can the development discourse be individualized and related to ongoing technical, political and economic

events? How did development become a space for the systematic creation of concepts, theories and practices?" (Escobar, 1997, pp. 85-86)

In many ways, development is forward-looking: traversed by 'the will to improve' (Li, 2007), 'doing good' (Fisher, 1997), 'imagining a better world' (Crush, 1995) and 'the very best intentions' (Power, 2003); often at the expense of attention to historical and geographical context (Crush, 1995). However the historical and geographical context is crucial to understanding the emergence of a plurality of 'development' concepts – a "continuous intellectual project as well as an ongoing material process" (Apter, 1987, p. 7 in Power, 2003), or a social programme grounded in morality as well as transitional process towards a capitalist industrial economy (Ferguson, 1994). These different streams of development thinking are not entirely distinct (Power, 2003); they overlap and interconnect in complex and contested ways that are often discursively (over)simplified.

Scholars have linked the origins of 'development' to various periods in history where ideas of progress and civilization were emergent, such as the European Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, industrialisation in Central and Eastern Europe, and more recently colonial economics (Cowen & Shenton, 1995; Pieterse, 2009; Power, 2003; Willis & Kumar, 2009). The majority of scholars however consider that the creation of ideas and discourses about development (and 'underdevelopment') emerged in the years post-WWII, in what Escobar describes as a "new era in the understanding and management of world affairs" (1995a, p. 3). In his inaugural presidential address, Truman said:

"We must embark on a bold new program for...the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas. More than half the people of the world are living in conditions approaching misery. Their poverty is a handicap and a threat both to them and to more prosperous areas. For the first time in history, humanity possesses the knowledge and the skill to relieve the suffering of these people" (Truman, 1949 in Rojas, 2004).

The Truman presidential address is often referenced in synopses of the history of development (see for example Escobar, 1995a; Power, 2003; Rojas, 2004), as it encapsulates several characteristic features of an emerging global hegemonic approach to

international affairs. These include a heightened awareness and conceptualisation of 'poverty,' the creation of 'underdeveloped' and 'third world' as categories and identities for nation states, the notion that developed countries have the technology and knowledge to solve the 'problems,' and that a calculated 'programme' of intervention by 'developed' countries is the suitable approach. Rather than a political breakthrough, or radical epistemological shift, a number of factors re-aligned to set up a discourse of development (Escobar, 1997).

Truman's address was located in a time when colonialism was declining and hope for economic growth and stability rested in capitalist systems of production. Central to the capitalist push was mobilisation of its various elements – technology, population and resources, monetary and fiscal policies, industrialisation and agricultural development, commerce and trade - all of which was seen as necessary to achieve modernisation. It was assumed that 'Third World' countries needed to source these elements from abroad (Escobar, 1997), or in other words, from the 'developed' or 'western' world. Institutions to carry out this complex task were created, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and a number of technical agencies under the umbrella of the United Nations (Frank, 1997). Also influential during this time was the Cold War, infusing discourses of democracy into development efforts that sought to inspire 'Third World' countries to reject communism. Escobar emphasised that it was the system of relations between these factors – these technologies, forms of knowledge, armies of experts, institutions, socio-economic processes and so on – that established the discursive practices of development (1997, p. 87), rather than the individual factors themselves. The parallels of this approach with the relational emphasis of actor-network theory are important.

Armies of new experts surfaced within a new politics of knowledge; a crucial issue that underpins much of this chapter when it turns to the discourses of CBT. The politics of knowledge set the rules of the game:

“who can speak, from what points of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise; it sets the rules that must be followed for this or that problem, theory or object to emerge and be named, analysed, and eventually transformed into a policy or a plan” (Escobar, 1997, p. 87).

'Development thinking' (Hettne, 1995) has progressed through a variety of theoretical and political paradigms in the twentieth century, becoming ever more complex and ever more contested. The well known theories of modernisation, dependency and alternative development were briefly introduced in chapter one. These development theories show how ideas and understandings about progress have changed over time, influenced by a range of paradigms including Marxism, humanism, postmodernism, postcolonialism, sustainable development, political ecology, and more recently postdevelopment. A central argument in postdevelopment literature is that these development theories all occurred within the limiting bounds of the hegemonic development discourse developed in the post-WWII period. Most relevant to this research on development agency-assisted CBT is the postdevelopment argument that "particular ways of thinking and speaking about the 'Third World' have in turn made possible and legitimised certain practices and interventions towards these parts of the globe" (Power, 2003, p. 86). This chapter explores how particular ways of thinking and speaking about CBT legitimises particular CBT practices and limits others.

In their efforts to lift the lid on the hegemony of development discourses, postdevelopment writers have emphasised that poverty is culturally, geographically and historically specific, where "although the experience of hunger and malnutrition is immediately material 'poverty' exists in a *discursive materialist formation* whereby the material, discourse and power are thoroughly intertwined" (Yapa, 1996, p. 36, emphasis in original). Thus for postdevelopment scholars, development is simultaneously material and discursive (Power, 2003), and development knowledge is always situated and partial (Yapa, 1996). Postdevelopment writers draw on poststructuralist scholarship such as Foucault's work to explain development as a system of power relations and as a discursive field. Of course discourse analysis methodologies are not unique to postdevelopment, rather, as Pieterse (2009, p. 341) puts it,

"what is distinctive for postdevelopment is that from a methodology discourse analysis has been turned into an ideological platform. According to Escobar, World Bank studies and documents 'all repeat the same story'... Postdevelopment thinking is uneven. For all the concern with discourse

analysis, the use of language is often sloppy. In proposing to do away with development, postdevelopment essentializes ‘development’ and implies that it is possible to arrive at an unequivocal definition.”

With these criticisms in mind, a key concern of this chapter is to apply postdevelopment approaches to a discourse analysis of tourism *for* development and in doing so alongside an ANT methodology, it is hoped that ‘development’ can be recognised as heterogenous rather than essentialised, involving multiple interwoven stories rather than ‘the same story’³¹. The chapter now turns to explore through empirical examples how CBT discourses are the “articulation of knowledge and power, of the visible and the inexpressible” (Escobar, 1997, p. 85) with the intention of exploring how these discourses influence material realities.

Defying definition: Discourses of Sustainable Tourism, Community-based Tourism and Responsible Tourism

The World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) defines sustainable tourism as that which “meets the needs of present tourists and host regions while protecting and enhancing opportunity for the future” (UNWTO, 1996 in Stevens, 2010). There have been dozens of other attempts to define sustainable tourism; however the term ‘sustainable tourism’ seems to defy a widely accepted definition. It is often unclear in the literature whether the term is being used to refer to the sustainability of tourism and of the resources on which tourism depends, or whether it refers to sustainable development at a broader scale through tourism (Sharpley, 2009). Despite these two distinct perspectives, often the terms ‘sustainable tourism’ and ‘sustainable tourism development’ are used interchangeably both in academic literature and in practice (Sharpley, 2009).

Like sustainable tourism, and perhaps because of it, CBT is difficult to define. As discussed in chapter one, the increased popularity of CBT has come with an increase in the ambiguity of definition and interpretation of the key concepts (Goodwin & Santilli, 2009). There is a major gap between the definitions used by academics and practitioners. CBT as a

³¹ A further discussion of criticisms of postdevelopment can be viewed in chapter six.

term in Viet Nam is used very flexibly, generally incorporating any small-scale tourism at the village level with some intention for local involvement and benefit. Among many tour operators, the terms sustainable tourism, community-based tourism and responsible tourism are used interchangeably and ubiquitously. Interviews with tour operators, and a study of their promotional materials revealed that there is some confusion over the concepts of responsible tourism and CBT as products versus approaches. The consequences of this confusion of terms is articulated by Burns (2004, p. 27), who notes that “tensions between actors involved in development arise from mismatched definitions of development.”

To depict the various CBT definitions it is helpful to envisage a continuum. Weak CBT would be located at one end, and represents any small scale tourism activity taking place within a village. At the other end, strong CBT would require community ownership, control and benefit sharing. Development agencies and NGOs are located at the strong CBT end, and tour operators are spread out along the continuum but usually towards the weak end of the CBT spectrum. Interviews with tour operators revealed their positions at the weak end of the CBT spectrum through what was excluded from their descriptions of CBT; particularly community ownership and/or control, capacity building, and benefit sharing mechanisms. These competing discourses of development and of CBT have significant implications for the success of CBT initiatives, particularly for effective partnerships.

A key difference in understandings of CBT that discourse analysis highlights is that of community *involvement* in CBT initiatives, versus community *control* (Butcher, 2007). These different understandings of CBT processes have significant implications for potential partnerships between tour operators and development agencies. As stated in chapter three, many tour operators are moving towards establishing privately owned and operated community lodges, in a bid for exclusive use and improved quality control. Viewed from a position at the weak end of the CBT spectrum, this would still be perceived as CBT due to the village (local) location, and creation of jobs associated with operating the lodge. However from a strong CBT position on the continuum, the crucial features of community ownership, community control and sharing of benefits are missing. For a development agency trying to partner with a tour operator to develop CBT, this is some gulf in understanding to bridge in order to effectively work together.

New opportunities for sharing of ideas and understandings of CBT exist in the recently reactivated Viet Nam Community-based Tourism Network (VCBTN), and the recently created Hanoi-based Responsible Travel Club. These network associations however (re)produce the separation between international aid and the private sector – by creating separate forums for development agencies and tour operators thus ignoring their own statements that “*we need to work together*” (Thao, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010). The separation between the public and private sectors hints at the power relations at play. As Livingston tells us, “to dictate definition is to wield cultural power” (1992, p. 304 in Herod & Wright, 2002) and the wide-ranging interpretations of the terms sustainable tourism, responsible tourism, and community-based tourism reflect significant underlying power struggles.

Imagined communities

There is a vast literature on the definition of ‘community’ and the term has pervaded the literature on sustainability and sustainable tourism (Blackstock, 2005; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). The conceptual difficulties of the term and the consequential implications of defining people in particular ways are seldom addressed in the CBT literature. On the meaning of ‘community’ in CBT, Stevens (2010, p. 453) opines “how this concept is operationally defined will determine who participates and who benefits from a project,” and accordingly it is important to analyse how this central component of CBT is understood by actors in CBT initiatives, if we are to understand how discursive constructs influence practical actions.

‘Community’ can mean many things, however in the Vietnamese context the term ‘community’ is usually a place-based descriptor, referring to inhabitants within the geographical division below commune government³² (Catford, 2006). Notions of a ‘regional community’ are rarely part of sustainable tourism discourses (Butcher, 2007), although it is noted that SNV are now working on a tourist route covering a large part of north-western Viet Nam, representing a departure from the more usual village based community

³² Typically referred to as a village but sometimes referring to several villages in close proximity.

development. The use of the term 'community' during interviews was almost solely restricted to non-Vietnamese participants, with Vietnamese participants more likely to refer to 'the local people.' Heterogeneity within communities (or 'local people') is barely recognised, with communities being described simultaneously as homogenous in their poverty, their passivity, their cohesiveness, their lack of knowledge about tourism, and their support for tourism development. These views are expressed in ways such as "*I must say that the local people, they are still very passive*" (Thao, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010) and "*they could hardly earn some money, most of them are very poor, under the poverty line of Vietnam*" (Minh, government official, pers. comm., 2010) and "*many of them cannot speak Vietnamese, and they have very limited access to knowledge, and business operation skills, so they need the outside support.*" (Thich, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010) – demonstrating how discourses of CBT host communities have the effect of ordering ethnic minority identities (Franklin, 2004).

These homogenous descriptions of CBT host communities create a form of 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983), united through their spatial location and imagined as cohesive in their support for tourism because of powerful discourses around their shared poverty and passivity. Homogenous conceptualisations of communities as passive and poor are common in development initiatives (Baaz, 2005; Crewe & Harrison, 1998; McEwan, 2009). However, most communities are far from homogenous; they are 'stratified and sites of power relations' (Blackstock, 2005, p. 42). In Sa Pa district examples abound to demonstrate the heterogeneity of host village communities in terms of poverty, passivity and cohesiveness, where social relations are by no means fixed. In Ta Phin village only the wealthiest families have homestay facilities, and therefore existing inequalities grow when the homestays are successful. The community fund in Ta Phin is defunct due to some individuals seeking maximum benefit for themselves, exemplified by the local handicraft association leader who has moved into the centre of the village from an outlying hamlet to secure a greater proportion of the few homestay tour groups. In Ban Ho village you can learn about how the first homestay to be established is owned by the village chief, and the second is owned by his son, illustrating that Ban Ho households are not equally 'poor' and differences in wealth can be exacerbated by tourism. The tour guides in Ban Ho describe how they repeatedly stay with homestay families that have become their friends, shunning the intended sharing of tourist custom around the homestays. The Sa Pa tour guides

describe the jealousy that has emerged within surrounding villages due to unequal distribution of tourism benefits. From these examples it is clear that, as identified in the literature, communities are heterogeneous, yet they are continually portrayed and understood as homogenous, particularly with respect to their cohesiveness, assertiveness, and poverty.

What it means to be 'poor' is rarely explained in development literature in general (Farrington & Bebbington, 1993; McEwan, 2009) and in Viet Nam specifically (Asian Development Bank, 2002). McEwan (2009) argues that the unproblematisation of the term 'poor' is at the heart of many development discourses, taking western assumptions of poor and ignoring the impacts of this labelling. Measures of poverty are usually rooted in western capitalist ideology, such as household income, rather than emic interpretations. For example, the H'mong emic definition of being 'poor' is to not produce enough rice to feed the household for a year (Tugault-Lafleur & Turner, 2009) just as it is in Laos (Harrison & Schipani, 2007). This is quite removed from an international poverty line figure based on monetary income, or the United Nation's Human Development Index. Poverty in Viet Nam is "widely considered to be virtually synonymous with minority ethnicity" (Taylor, 2008, p. 17). Criticising use of the term 'poor' is not to deny the extreme hardships that many people living in north-west Viet Nam face, nor should this be read as a lack of recognition of national statistics that show ethnic minority peoples as experiencing vast inequalities in terms of access to healthcare, education and other social welfare services. Important here is that discursive labelling of ethnic minority people as poor may deny agency, deny historical traditions of flexible adaptation and livelihood diversification (Taylor, 2008), and ultimately restrict the imagining of new development assistance strategies.

Another key theme that emerged from interviews was the notion of authenticity, which has been debated in tourism literature since the 1970s (MacCannell, 1973) but particularly in the last decade (Cohen, 2002; Mowforth & Munt, 2003; Munt, 1994; Scheyvens, 2002; Urry, 2002; West & Carrier, 2004). Community-based tourism activities in north-western Viet Nam are based around tourists visiting ethnic minority villages to 'gaze' (Urry, 2002) at 'authentic' cultures and 'authentic' ways of life. Discursive constructions of ethnic minority identities in north-western Viet Nam are rooted in perceptions of cultural and

developmental stasis, creating identities that are fundamentally timeless (Taylor, 2008). This is demonstrated in the following quote from the Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi:

“Preservation of the unique cultural identities of every ethnic group is deemed to be a necessity. The country is developing quickly on all fronts, moving towards industrialisation and modernisation. But the cultural garden of ethnic populations has to be forever Vietnamese, rich and diverse, by the crystallisation of all the communities in the great family of the Vietnamese nation, even while it accepts the cultural essence of people all over the world.”
(Museum of Ethnology display, as viewed in April 2010)

Tourist promotional material also reinforces discourses of authenticity and timelessness, for example “share a meal cooked on an open fire as it has been for centuries” (Lao Cai Tourist Information Centre, undated) and experience “unchanged authentic cultures” (Sa Pa Tourism, undated) and “these Montagnards³³ continue to live as they have for generations despite coming into contact with outside influences” (Ray & Yanagihara, Lonely Planet, 2005, p. 148). Through discourse, authenticity is commodified as a tourism product that requires protecting, as illustrated in this quote from a government tourism official:

*“We want it to be conserved, to be authentic forever, that’s why we want the people there to understand that what they have now is unique, what they do have now is authentic, and once they’ve lost it, it’s gone forever.”*³⁴ (Minh, pers. comm., 2010)

Discourses of authenticity, and the phenomenon of the tourist gaze that consumes ‘authenticity,’ are based on notions of difference (Urry, 2002) and ‘the Other’ (Said, 1978). These powerful processes can be understood as actants in CBT actor-network(s), which serve to black box the tourist experience in CBT. In particular, these processes construct

³³ A French word for mountain dwellers that has persisted since French colonialism and is often used to refer to people living in the mountains of Viet Nam.

³⁴ This quote has not been taken out of context – the statement was made without reference to any particular location, CBT initiative or specific group of people.

tourism as static and in dualistic ways, based on clear distinctions between tourists and hosts, the ordinary and the authentic (Johannesson, 2005). As a result, the multiple relations and spatialities of tourism are poorly understood, particularly the materially heterogeneous relations underlying initiatives aimed at developing tourism (*ibid*).

Through CBT discourses that embrace and advocate authenticity, culture is understood as embedded in history and not as a dynamic process of future-making. Portraying the cultural identities and traditions of ethnic minority groups as stable and static acts as an instrument of power, constraining conceptions of substantial change and denying agency (Butcher, 2007). Active encouragement of local communities to preserve their traditions can be contradictory to development goals. As Butcher (2007, p. 118) observes, the “influence of cultural relativism has made it difficult to argue the simple humanist aspiration that the benefits enjoyed in one society should be made available to others.” Development agencies recognise that tourists seek so-called authentic experiences in CBT activities in north-west Viet Nam, and are therefore in a contradictory and difficult position as they try to effect positive change in host communities using a method that relies on visitors perceiving that things are unchanged. The difficulties are magnified when development agencies interact with government authorities and the private sector, who typically perpetuate the authentic fallacy. The paradox of tourism for development initiatives being based on a CBT product that requires visitors to sense authenticity and timelessness is discussed further in chapter five.

In discourses of CBT host communities, the issue of gender has been almost entirely absent. Although an in-depth exploration of gender issues is beyond the scope of this research, some key observations are noted here. When asked what they regretted about existing development assistance initiatives, two development agency employees working for different organisations in different locations observed:

“I would have done a gender analysis; to prove what we were doing was actually benefitting women substantially. It’s a really difficult question when you cut across cultures, and I felt that we had addressed it because we were essentially training mostly women. My view was that women were being empowered with generating money, so that was good enough from my

perspective, and so we went around for a second round of funding and they said you haven't quite provided this whole thing around gender" (Peter, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010).

"Just having income doesn't necessarily mean that it's good, if say the women in the household have to do three times as much, so it's nice to see how its changed their lives. You know, when I was up in Ban Ho, talking to one of the women there, and it's nice to hear her say, you know it's been great, how it's empowered her in her relationship with her husband, now that she's earning some money" (John, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010).

The author of the first quote implies that incorporating gender is important for proof to donors and for obtaining more funding; and with regard to impacts on gender roles he makes assumptions that women benefit as they earn money. The second quote illustrates an understanding that there are many societal impacts through changes in gender roles, however unfortunately that particular agency does not include social impact monitoring as part of their evaluation strategies. How CBT development impacts on men living in the host communities was not mentioned in any interview. Interestingly, all interview participants but two were men. Consideration of gender issues in development initiatives has become increasingly obligatory over the last two decades, and in Viet Nam development agencies bring a wealth of experience in gender sensitive planning. Unfortunately this experience is poorly documented and research on gender issues in Viet Nam has been very slow to develop (Scott & Chuyen, 2006). There is substantial scope for further research in this area.

The descriptive discourses about host communities have significant material implications for how development agencies, tour operators and government departments judge the potential for development assistance and CBT initiatives. Succinctly put by Bramwell, "discourses can delimit the 'possible,' tending to steer thought and action in a particular direction" (2006, p. 961). For example, that host communities are viewed as very passive may negatively impinge on how development agencies predict the success of micro-finance as a method of development assistance, a popular tool in other countries that was not raised in interviews at all. Homogenising and imagining a community in this manner also "may prompt backlashes, and can disguise, conceal, eclipse and erase critical interests,

processes and causal links within communities and between communities and other social formations (Agrawal, 1997 in Belsky, 1999). As Taylor writes of rural Viet Nam, discursive constructions of host communities as 'poor' affects the way these individuals view themselves:

“the gloomy conclusion in development reports that poverty has become concentrated in rural areas and predominantly among ethnic minority people has taken hold in rural areas, where it is common for rural people to describe their standard of living as “poor” [*nghèo*], to characterize agriculture as an “occupation of the poor,” and to depict aspects of rural lifestyles such as thatched houses, sun-darkened skin, and religious orientations as signs of deprivation” (2007, p. 9).

The discursive emphasis on the passivity of local communities also conceals the reality that resistance to CBT initiatives sometimes occurs, such as the non-functioning of tourism benefit-sharing mechanisms in Ta Phin village. Baaz (2005) also suggests that constructing local communities as passive attributes blame for unsuccessful development interventions, and thus serves to protect the development agency from a sense of failure. I would argue that this applies to tour operator's use of the term passive also.

There are power relations inherent in these discursive constructions of a homogenous community. In viewing 'community' as an institution, Rose argues that the notion of community makes a “collective existence intelligible and calculable” where issues are “problematized *in terms of* features of communities and their strengths, cultures, pathologies” and “solutions take the form of acting upon community dynamics” (1999 in Li, 2007, emphasis in original). The 'development problematic' introduced in chapter three becomes evident in CBT in Viet Nam, where the discursive constructions of homogenous communities allow other actors (government authorities, development agencies, tour operators) to define problems, employ 'experts,' and calculate and legitimise solutions. It is important to acknowledge that this is not necessarily a deliberate manipulative process, but regardless of the intentions the process is still the same.

It is also interesting to note that the H'mong ethnic minority group were frequently singled out for description by interview participants, although with contradictory statements, for example *"we work mostly with Hmong people, they are not very difficult"* (Mary, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010) and *"developing something with the H'mong is actually the most difficult challenge you can have in Vietnam...the H'mong are really hard, that was a bit fool to start a project with the H'mong"* (Jeff, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010). H'mong homes were also described as undesirable for homestays because they are *"dirty"* and because the H'mong owners *"don't really care"* (Mary, development agency, pers. comm., 2010). No other ethnic group was singled out in this way in interviews, positively or negatively. These exclusive and stereotypical descriptions of the H'mong people create disaffection and disconnection from the H'mong people, manifesting as an absence of concern for the H'mong people on the basis that the challenges are too great to overcome (McEwan, 2009). This discussion is not to deny that the H'mong people may generally be more challenging for development agencies to work with than other ethnic minority groups. However, it is important to recognise that discursively representing the H'mong in the ways described above acts to reproduce (primarily negative) stereotypes that have material effects such as denying the H'mong agency and voice³⁵.

An imagined community also exists with respect to the identity of 'the tourist'. Despite growing statistical evidence that domestic and regional tourists make up the most significant proportion of tourists to south-east Asia (Winter, 2009a), interview participants discursively (re)produce an imagined community of white, western, foreign, backpacker tourists in north-western Viet Nam, who are the target consumers for CBT. This is established through examples such as the continual reference to tourist identities as 'western³⁶', through the provision of English language training for hosts, through the emphasis on western style toilets, and workshops for hosts to learn about catering for western palates. 'The tourist' in north-western Viet Nam is black boxed, their identity assumed and unquestioned by the majority of actors in the actor-network. Although this underlying construction of 'the tourist' identity as persistently western in south-east Asia

³⁵ For a detailed study on the conflicting ways that ethnic minority groups, particularly the H'mong, are represented in Viet Nam see Philip Taylor's comprehensive essay (2008).

³⁶ The problematic use of the term 'western' is noted.

has been questioned in recent academic literature (Alneng, 2002; Winter, 2009a; Winter, 2009b; Winter et al., 2009), in general the tourism literature persists in viewing tourists as westerners. As Alneng laments, “the exclusiveness of the tourist-as-modern-as-westerner has yet to be properly questioned” (2002, p.137). By constructing ‘the tourist’ as a western character, there is a danger that host communities will also buy into this discursive construction, closing off imaginative and entrepreneurial opportunities to develop tourism initiatives targeting non-western tourists. The same applies to development agencies; in persisting with the assumed western tourist identity, alternative and potentially more effective development initiatives may be eliminated from conceptualisation.

Development agencies are also a black box. There is a widespread lack of acknowledgement of heterogeneity within and between development agencies in Viet Nam, and they are usually discursively conceptualised as homogenous. In response to this trend in the literature more generally, Fisher urges researchers to “avoid reductionist views of NGOs as fixed and generalizable entities with essential characteristics and [instead] contextualise them within evolving processes of associating” (1997, p. 442). It is thus important to open the black box; to acknowledge the stratifications and heterogeneity both between organisations and within organisations, and acknowledge that development agencies are simultaneously actors and networks. Recognising the heterogeneity within and between development organisations in writing is a difficult challenge in this ANT oriented research, for the focus is on the relations between actors rather than providing an in-depth analysis of specific development agency actors. The purpose here is essentially to explore the ways that development agencies are discursively conceptualised by other actors, in order to understand the *relations* that make up the CBT actor-networks. Once a conceptual understanding of the CBT actor-networks in north-western Viet Nam is established, the next step for further research would be to further dissect the identities, motivations and agenda of specific development agencies to understand their influence on the functioning of the actor-networks more deeply.

Turning first to the heterogeneity within organisations, scholarship on development and tourism tends to operate at the organisational level, overlooking the importance and influence of the individual. Quoting Gibson-Graham, it is an “interesting irony that in the current neoliberal political climate, in which individualism is promoted as an unquestioned

social good, all over the world the term community has increasingly come to the fore” (2006, p. 84). As an example, the high turnover of staff in the ‘development industry’ is acknowledged as a constraint (Mahanty et al., 2009), and in this research all interview participants representing development agencies had been in their jobs for less than a year. Other actors did not acknowledge individuality within development organisations during interviews. This homogenising approach to organisations was similar across the board – including perspectives on tour operators and government authorities; although in the case of the latter the influence of individuals was raised as follows:

“We are having some administrative issues with the local authorities from the province. At the beginning of each phase they have to sign an agreement between [development agency] and the province. It has been three months and they haven’t signed. We know that some official changed their position, or they retired. It’s how it works here, if you know them, they sign quickly, if you don’t they may not” (Mary, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010).

In terms of the heterogeneity between organisations, residents of host communities were rarely able to single out specific organisations. When questioned about CBT training programmes most people only recalled that ‘*someone from Hanoi*’ or ‘*some foreigners*’ came to assist (Ut, Li, May, Ta Phin residents, pers. comm., 2010). Some participants started talking about other forms of assistance that they saw as preferable alternatives to tourism, such as agricultural diversification. This suggests that some local people perceive foreign development agencies as imagined communities that are able to assist with any type of development project. Interviews with tour operators and government officials usually resulted in development agencies being grouped together, referred to generally as ‘they’ or ‘them’ rather than singled out by their organisation or project. Links can be made between the homogenous identities of development agencies involved in tourism in Viet Nam and a number of broader issues that plague development agencies in the global literature. Broadly speaking, the homogenous and vague understandings of development agencies contribute to antipolitics: where the politics underpinning relationships and actions involving development agencies are obscured (Ferguson, 1994; Fisher, 1997). CBT discourse constructs development agencies as a ‘tool’ of knowledge necessary for achieving

development 'solutions.' Returning again to the 'development problematic' that is thematic throughout this research, we can see in CBT actor-networks how:

“just as the 'development apparatus' has generally depoliticized the need for development through its practice of treating local conditions as 'problems' that required technical and not structural or political solutions (Ferguson, 1990), it now defines problems that can be addressed via the mechanisms of NGOs rather than through political solutions” (Fisher, 1997, p. 446).

Acknowledging the antipolitics of development agency assistance in CBT points to a range of questions that materialise out of this discourse analysis. Does this antipolitics obscure the influence of underlying agendas and ideological biases that may be inherent in development agencies? Does it make responsibility and criticism less attributable? Does it reinforce an 'us' and 'them' separation between development agencies and their potential partners in CBT? Does it limit the directionality of resistance? Future research should explore these links more fully, but this discussion shows the potential of ANT and discourse analysis to highlight these questions.

It is likely that much of the discursive homogeneity of development agencies stems from their remote presence (such as a central base in Hanoi) relative to the geographic location of host communities and local authorities (where Vietnamese consultant staff of development agencies are often the visible representatives). The combined use of ANT and discourse analysis as methodological tools allows us to see how actor-networks cohere across diverse spaces (Davies, 2003), and can exert power from a distance. Drawing again on a quote used earlier from Li (2007, p. 5) we can see how “when power operates at a distance, people are not necessarily aware of how their conduct is being conducted or why, so the question of consent does not arise.” The ability to exert power from a distance is linked to the politics of knowledge. As introduced earlier in this chapter, the dominant development discourse allows development agencies to assume knowledge superiority and 'expert' status. If the production of knowledge is not questioned, then neither is the identity of the producer. This reinforces the antipolitics of development agency assistance and the associated homogenous identity of such agencies in Viet Nam. The next section introduces

the term 'knowledge communities' to provide a conceptual tool for understanding the production of knowledge about CBT and development assistance.

Knowledge communities

In ANT, knowledge is a relational social product, which is “continually shaped through local processes of patterning, social orchestration, ordering and resistance” (Ren et al., 2010, p. 6). The concept of knowledge communities provides a useful lens through which to view the (re)production of knowledge about CBT, and the networks of power relations that enable certain groups of people to impose their knowledge on others (Pinch, 1998). Notwithstanding the heterogeneity within and between organisations, a knowledge community is

“a group of people, often in separate organizations, but united by a common set of norms, values, and understandings, that define the knowledge and production trajectories of the economic sector to which they belong” (Pinch, 2009, p.25).

Pinch goes on to explain that within geographical scholarship, knowledge communities incorporate a wide range of social groupings and the following discussion argues that those individuals and organisations involved in development assistance in CBT in Viet Nam form a knowledge community.

The concept of knowledge communities originated in the sociology of scientific knowledge, where a social constructivist approach argued that:

“the acceptance or rejection of scientific ideas or technological innovations is to be found within the social rather than the natural world. It is argued that there is no natural logic to the world waiting to reveal itself; hence, there is usually enormous uncertainty surrounding new theories or scientific developments – what is termed the *period of interpretative flexibility*. Following this period, scientific and technical communities gradually form a consensus about the meanings of new developments and *social closure* takes

place. However, scientific studies often fail to produce conclusive evidence and so social closure must be secured by the forging of discourses – shared sets of meanings about the nature of the evidence. Accordingly, truth is not envisaged as something intrinsic to a statement but rather a form of representation that is forged through power struggles between groups of competing knowledge producers” (Pinch, 2009, p. 26, emphasis added).

The concept has clear links with Foucault’s approach to power/knowledge, as central to the process of achieving social closure is the forging of discourses (Pinch, 1998). These concepts also align with Escobar (1995) and Ferguson’s (1994) writings on development discourse and ‘the development apparatus’ that inform this research. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, since the 1950s a dominant development discourse has developed with respect to the identity and ‘problems’ of the ‘Third World’ and solutions to so-called Third World problems; encapsulated in paradigms such as modernisation, neoliberalism and alternative development. The various development ‘solutions’ have never been supported by conclusive evidence and particular knowledge producers such as the World Bank forge discourses by interpreting and disseminating particular understandings of development strategies in attempts to obtain social closure. The knowledge producers (for example, the World Bank in the 1970s and 1980s with respect to structural adjustment lending programmes as the solution for ‘Third World’ poverty) interact with other (sometimes competing) knowledge producers and discourses become (re)produced or (re)negotiated in complex ways. Although the dominant development discourse has endured to the present day, examples of power struggles with competing knowledge producers are found globally (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994; Power, 2003). It is also important to acknowledge that forging discourses is usually not a conscious or deliberate action by knowledge producers.

There are knowledge communities around the concept of CBT, with development agencies and NGOs forming a powerful knowledge community. At times this knowledge community shares tenuous relationships with tour operators and government authorities in the formation and dissemination of CBT knowledge. At other times tour operators and government authorities form their own independent knowledge communities, illustrating that the formation of accepted CBT knowledge is a contested issue. People living in host

communities form their own knowledge community, albeit one that often has little voice and lacks political power in the construction of accepted knowledge. In exploring the actor-networks of CBT in north-western Viet Nam, the key question is to ask then, is who is making claims to 'the truth' and whose interests do these claims serve (Pinch, 1998)? Chapter five explores in more detail the different knowledge producers in CBT and how competing (re)productions of CBT knowledge have different material outcomes for CBT initiatives. The next section explores how the politics of knowledge are (re)produced through discourse.

Discourses of knowledge

Development 'knowledge' has traditionally been understood as a unidirectional transfer of a solution (rather than a base for learning) from knowledge communities in wealthier countries to 'less developed' or 'poor' countries (Mawdsley et al., 2002 in McEwan, 2009, p. 205). This persists despite the alternative and sustainable development paradigms placing greater emphasis on traditional and indigenous knowledges (Butcher, 2007). The articulation of knowledge as a one-way transfer to local communities is the foundation of postcolonial theory where "the creators of knowledge and those intervening have agency; those receiving knowledge and being 'developed' are passive" (McEwan, 2009, p. 210). The dominant development discourse that frames intervention as "technical assistance" is related to these colonial practices of knowledge transfer (Walker et al., 2008), and is tied to the role of expatriate experts in development more generally (Escobar, 1995; Ferguson, 1994; Mitchell, 2002; Wainwright, 2008). Technical assistance was historically tied to the implementation of capital works and projects, and as a concept has endured much criticism and various changes in terminology. 'Technical co-operation' for example was an attempt to imply through language more equality in partnerships (Walker et al., 2008). More recently the practice of technical assistance has shifted to a focus on capacity building, or what Walker et al. (2008) calls 'soft TA,' referring to the "provision of expert services for institutional and human development and training" (Wallace, 1990 in Walker et al., 2008, p. 530).

Development assistance with CBT in Viet Nam lies somewhere in the middle of this continuum of technical assistance, tending towards soft TA more recently. The notion of

lineal one-way forms of knowledge transfer is a dominant discourse in CBT, frequently reproduced by tour operators and development agencies in north-west Viet Nam through statements such as:

“They don’t know how to do tourism. That’s the reason why it’s simple, it’s go in and train them” (Thao, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010)

“But the people don’t know how to develop tourism in the correct way” (Phuong, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010)

“These rural communities, I think it takes up to five years before they really understand the concept of tourism or what it means, and how they can manage it themselves” (Simon, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010)

“The ethnic people have very limited skills ability of speaking Vietnamese. Many of them cannot speak Vietnamese, and they have very limited access to knowledge, and business operation skills, so they need the outside support.” (Minh, government official, pers. comm., 2010)

“They need to have more support. Because they live from farming work, they live from collecting products from the forest, so tourism is totally something new to them, they cannot be a good tourism operator in one night, so that’s why they need to have more effort, more support from our project” (Hien, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010)

“First we need the people to follow, because for them it’s completely new, they haven’t heard about tourism before, so they need to learn how to accommodate people...” (Mary, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010)

These quotes illustrate how knowledge is conceptualised as a fixed commodity (Long & Villareal, 1994 in Mosse, 1991). Discourses of knowledge are used by development agencies and tour operators (a knowledge community) to problematise the circumstances and

legitimise their intervention by explicitly stating that host communities do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to establish CBT, and inferring that they - the development agency, NGO or tour operator - do. Development agencies for example have a large audience to air and reproduce these views, such as internal staff, tour operators, local and national government authorities, consultants, researchers like myself, readers of website material and project documentation, and of course donors. Local voices and local knowledge has a comparatively miniscule audience, thus showing how discursive processes around knowledge have the effect of creating and reproducing unequal power relationships. As Walker et al. (2008, p. 536) summarise, “the claims to certain knowledge on the part of the experts serve to maintain the gaps between identities (expert and poor person) and spaces (urban and rural) they are purportedly designed to close.” Contrary to some scholarship on this issue, in Viet Nam this statement applies regardless of whether the expert is an expatriate of a ‘western’ country or Vietnamese.

Accepting knowledge as a fixed commodity leads to assumptions that fixed time frames can be easily attached for the ‘transfer’ of knowledge. Only one development agency interviewed acknowledged that sharing knowledge about CBT with local people would increase their capacity, thirst and need for more knowledge:

“We always talked about having a project that in itself is sustainable, we leave and it keeps on going, but that’s hard when you take a community to a different stage of being, and you essentially address the set up problems only to create a new set of problems, right? So change is inevitable, and they are deciding their change in their community, but they constantly have questions that they need to have answered and they’re looking for advice” (Peter, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010).

Several female interviewees from Ta Phin village also agreed that they would like more training, indicating that the perceived passivity about local people does not equate to a lack of enthusiasm for learning.

The conceptualisation of tourism knowledge as something to be passed from development agency to host communities and government staff is closely linked to a

discourse around 'education.' Reinforcing Escobar's (1995a) concept of the development problematic, Baaz (2005, p. 168) identifies that the images of passing knowledge from development agents to passive local communities constructs a paternalistic discourse that legitimises the right of the development agent to identify the 'problem' and 'solution' for any given community. Fletcher adds that 'education' or the giving of knowledge "may be viewed as a euphemism for the attempt to propagate an ecotourism discourse that is *largely invisible to those who champion it* and thus appears as a simple communication of 'facts'" (2009, p. 280, emphasis added). Thus not only do discourses of knowledge transfer and education serve to legitimise a development agency's involvement, but through this 'education' other discourses are propagated, such as the promulgation of western democratic ideology through the advocacy of participatory processes in CBT development. That these discourses are *largely invisible to those who champion it* is located in the reality that development agencies working in Viet Nam are almost exclusively from 'western' countries, with western donors and many international (non-Vietnamese) advisors.

A "simple communication of the facts" (Fletcher, 2009, p. 280) is how the goals of community-based tourism are discursively constructed as a progressive step towards sustainable development (Butcher, 2007). In CBT, the concept of the homestay is constructed as a normative good by development agencies assisting with tourism development.

Researcher: *So what sort of training were you doing?*

Phuong: *We focused on the homestay development*

Researcher: *Just to interrupt here, why homestays?*

Phuong: *Because in Ta Phin they hadn't developed homestay, so it's totally new, so they need the support on that.*

The above extract from an interview with a development agency employee is illustrative of the widely held assumption that if a village doesn't have homestays, or perhaps only a few homestays, then creating more is a good thing and a logical progression. These sorts of views came from development agencies and government employees, but not all tour operators; many of the latter lent support for privately or community owned lodges instead

of homestays as a means of reducing jealousy issues. However, the dominance of this discourse that supports homestays limits the potential for alternative ideas to emerge.

Focusing on the physical structures associated with CBT homestays revealed the material effects of privileging external knowledge over local knowledge in construction projects. Three examples clearly demonstrate that local knowledge input would have made a valuable difference to the outcomes. Firstly, new mattresses donated by a development agency to homestay owners in Ta Phin were disposed of after six months by the owners as they were thought to be unsanitary (van der Meulen, 2010). The host households returned to traditional straw mattresses. Secondly, a brand new market area built in Ta Phin for textile sales stands empty as the open sided structure allows too much moisture to enter the textiles, which reacts with the dyes traditionally used in the fabrics. The location of the market area is also too far from the parking area where tourist vans stop, and mobile textile sales are preferred over fixed markets by many vendors for reasons other than the ability to exert economic pressure on tourists (Hanh, 2008). Thirdly, small concrete toilet facilities built outside homestays in the Muong Ha Valley (Sa Pa) are incompatible with existing architecture and are difficult to keep clean. As a Sa Pa tour operator advised,

“someone who really wants to do a good thing, but is lacking enough knowledge, may even damage the general scenery. The traditional dwellings of the minority people in the villages are always in great harmony with the surroundings. And suddenly concrete toilets up here in front of traditional house!” (Sinh, pers. comm., 2010).

These examples illustrate McEwan’s claim that “dominant knowledges close off spaces for the articulation of alternative knowledge forms” (2009, p. 165) impacting negatively on the effectiveness of development assistance in CBT.

The sharing of knowledge between development agencies, and between development agencies and the private sector is rarely a deliberate occurrence in the north-west Vietnamese context. According to Farrington and Bebbington (1993), this is consistent with the wider literature on NGOs and development agencies more generally. Interview participants raised the issue of poor communication between organisations in the same

geographical area, stressing the need for improved dialogue in order to share experiences for collective benefit and learning.

“I don’t know exactly what they are doing” (Mary, development agency employee, referring to tour operators working the area)

“I hope we can, by meeting up, make a kind of competence transfer” (Jeff, tour operator referring to development agencies)

“We are not going in the same direction, we just go, I go this way and you go the other way. So it’s kind of like wasting time and resources, but if we can all work together...”(Thao, tour operator, referring to development agencies)

“I go to a lot of these meetings, and I think a lot of NGOs don’t really understand what tourism means, they’re in a new national park somewhere and they come to us and say ‘we want to introduce you to the national park,’ so we say ‘great, we’ll go and look at the national park,’ and they take us there for three days, and they show us the park and it’s beautiful and it’s great, but we can’t turn around and sell that tomorrow” (Simon, tour operator).

The issues implicit in the above quotes support Jamal and Getz’s (1995, p. 196 in Reed, 1997) argument that emergent tourism destinations are characterised by “the presence of numerous organizations and lack a well defined inter-organizational process.” In the same vein, GTZ (2007) also document the lack of inter-organisational cooperation and sharing of knowledge specifically in CBT. This is unfortunate given that *“community tourism is a bit of a frontier of understanding, and of learning, and you know, how it works, what are the best techniques for it to get off the ground”* (Peter, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010). As stated earlier, there is great potential that the recently reactivated Hanoi-based CBT Network may begin to foster greater communication and collaboration of ideas among development agencies. Similarly, the Hanoi-based Responsible Travel Club has great potential to strengthen the capacity of that particular knowledge community. The goals of these groups echo the words of one interview participant: *“we need a very good coordination, in order to achieve effective intervention of different donors, including*

government. We need, I think a forum, a forum would be good” (Minh, government official, pers. comm., 2010).

Clearly the politics of knowledge construction, dissemination and negotiation is a key issue in CBT, and development more generally. As Escobar wrote “development can be best described as an apparatus that links forms of knowledge about the Third World with the deployment of forms of power and intervention, resulting in the mapping and production of Third World societies” (1995, p. 213). As knowledge and power are inseparable (Foucault, 1980), the next section builds on this discussion of knowledge in CBT to address the politics and power that is embedded in discourses around CBT.

(Anti)Politics and Power in CBT

“While equitable, fair and local empowering forms of tourism production, governance and consumption remain the aspiration, inevitably they require interaction among human beings; in other words, they are political processes and they are the subject of power relations among constituencies” (Church & Coles 2007, p. 7).

As analyses of power have become central to contemporary development studies (Crush, 1995; Radcliffe, 1999 in McEwan, 2009), in tourism studies recognition has also grown that power is a central concept (Wearing & McDonald, 2002), particularly with the advent of poststructuralist inspired tourism scholarship over the last two decades. Foucault’s understandings of power as a relational effect are adopted here, therefore it is always ‘relations of power’ that are under examination (Foucault, 1980). This section explores issues around power and politics within CBT through a discursive lens.

We have already seen how discourses around knowledge are used to legitimise development assistance in CBT, thus reinforcing unequal power/knowledge relationships between development agencies, tour operators, local government and local individuals or communities. McEwan (2009, p. 168) asserts that “the claim to expertise in optimizing the lives of others is a claim to power” which suggests that when development agencies support tourism initiatives despite a lack of experience in tourism (as identified in chapter three);

not only are they reinforcing unequal power relationships but they are using existing power inequalities to support their intervention.

Further justification of development intervention is seen through the discursive construction by development agencies of their role as 'facilitators' in the tourism for development process. This is clearly articulated through statements such as "*our job is actually to facilitate the work of tour operators*" (Mary, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010) and "*we are in the position of facilitation service. We facilitate the village to work together*" (Hien, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010). The development literature acknowledges an increase in development agencies describing their role as 'facilitators.' Henkel and Stirrat (2001) assert that discourses of 'facilitation' allow development agencies to disown the process, and appear less powerful. Although Baaz (2005) cautions against this conspiratorial reading of development agents as employing conscious tactics to legitimise their actions; she encourages counter-discourses (such as that of Henkel & Stirrat's), if they reveal the power inequalities hidden within dominant discourse(s). Discourses of facilitation in the general development literature are often related to participatory processes. Public participation in CBT processes was often excluded by development agencies when describing their role and functions during interviews. References to consultation with local people were made in the context of discussing the types of tourism to develop, rather than *if* tourism should develop, or what other development alternatives might be. As discussed in chapter three, often development agencies get involved in particular areas at the request of local government, which essentially skips the debate with local communities over *if* tourism should be supported and for what wider developmental goals (if any)³⁷.

Theoretically speaking, an objective of participatory processes is to empower local people in decision making; and in the context of development participatory processes are widely seen as necessary for acceptance of development initiatives by local communities (Cooke & Kothari, 2001b). Despite dominant discourses that construct host communities as homogenous, passive and cohesive, counter-discourses do exist that refer to jealousy and

³⁷ A critique of discourses and practices of public participation is discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

conflict at the village level over inequalities in tourism benefit-sharing. Examples from interview participants follow:

“Before in Pu Luong it was very very bad, there was one guy who was already rich enough to own a mobile phone, it was Nam, the head of the main village of the reserve, so he was almost the only one we could easily contact to organise a tour. He had 80% of the tourism at his house. Some families started to express that they thought it was a global project blah blah blah” (Jeff, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010)

“It’s not very easy and if we develop somewhere we will necessarily make some people unhappy, jealous nearby” (Jeff, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).

“I think they are now a bit loose in terms of doing it in a community way. Some of the families are moving their houses away, they are not staying in the same place. Even one of the ladies, she moved her house into the centre area, where most of the tourists go into. She put her homestay sign there, and people just go there and it’s not like I do it today and you do it tomorrow, but I move myself to the better area, I have to pay for the land, more expensive than yours in the remote mountain behind the hill, then I should have more visitors and I should have more money than you” (Thao, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).

[Homestays are] *“not sustainable at all because one or two or three families in a village are making all the money. And it’s a limited amount of money because we bring in all the other services. Over the longer run, the long term, I find it actually creates jealousy in the village because some are making more money than others” (Simon, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).*

Interestingly, these comments are all from tour operators who were typically more willing to discuss the issue of jealousy. This legitimises their support for community lodges rather than homestays, and in some cases partially explained why they no longer visit that particular village. Development agencies tended to spend more time during interviews talking about community benefit sharing mechanisms, for which evidence of successful

implementation examples were difficult to find during the course of this research. Conflict between the host community(s) and tour operators is the primary reason for intervention of one development agency: *“there is conflict between the local communities and the tour operators. The goal is there, that we try to rebalance the relationship between stakeholders. Economic conflict is always there, it happens during the development process.”* (Hien, pers. comm., 2010). Conflict is not inherently bad, as it shows that individuals within a community are engaging in political processes. Jealousy and conflict are actions of resistance, which subvert the perceived homogeneity and passivity of host communities and create new spaces for agency. These underlying processes have significant implications for the durability of CBT actor-networks.

The rise in conflict from inequalities in tourism benefits is a consequence of the individualistic capitalist underpinnings of tourism. As Wainwright states, “there can be no doubt that neoliberalism holds sway in discourses about development and economic management today” (2008, p. 4). The power of neoliberal capitalism is easily seen through the lens of tourism, where tourism has often been an agent that introduces or quickens the involvement of indigenous people into cash-based market economies (Schilcher, 2007; see Hanh, 2008 for an example in Sa Pa town). Some actions of development agencies and some tour operators in CBT in Viet Nam perpetuate neoliberal capitalist ideologies (Harvey, 2005 in Fletcher, 2009). This is consistent with arguments made increasingly in the literature that ecotourism (a subset of CBT) and the sustainable tourism discourses that support it are part of an increasing trend towards neoliberalism (Fletcher, 2009; Mowforth & Munt, 2003; West & Carrier, 2004). This is achieved through discursive and material approaches to poverty alleviation that encourage participation within a cash-based economy, promote material growth, and commodify culture through discursively creating local communities and objects as static, authentic, and to be preserved to sustain tourism. What the CBT discourses discussed here show is that capitalism is treated as development, and in this way “capitalist social relations are normalised through discourse (Wainwright, 2008). With respect to local involvement in tourism, Turner encourages us to ask “is it an assumption,

tinged with western biases regarding capitalist economic success, which makes us believe that they want greater involvement?" (2007, p. 400)³⁸.

Like the earlier discussion on the definition of being 'poor,' measures of success in CBT are also discursively shaped as capitalist economic growth outcomes (Turner, 2007). Success is measured by the tour operator, government or development agency rather than the host communities and individuals themselves. The implications of this detachment between host communities and 'success' can be explained via the following example. Hanh's (2008) study of H'mong textile sellers in Sa Pa reveals that contrary to popular opinion, the young H'mong women leave their villages to sell textiles in Sa Pa town not only to earn a cash income, but for a number of social reasons such as the enjoyment of interacting with tourists, establishing friendships with other women in the town, and gaining independence over their daily activities as well as their financial actions. The significance of this is that development agencies (particularly SNV) and the local government (with a Kinh majority) have been discussing for years how to remove the mobile textile sellers from the streets of Sa Pa, where they 'pursue' and 'annoy' tourists. Numerous attempts to set up markets have been made (Michaud & Turner, 2000) but these markets continue to be the domain of Kinh people selling cheap imported Chinese goods. I was able to enter the actor-network at this opportunity, giving SNV a copy of Hanh's study, which was subsequently passed around other development consultants in Hanoi. The example of the H'mong mobile textile sellers and the market demonstrates that motivations of local people are not necessarily based on capitalist economic motivations (Turner, 2007), and development assistance will not be successful if the motivations and aspirations of local people are not understood by development agencies and local government. Unfortunately it is very uncommon for donor-assisted development agencies to undertake research prior to conceptualisation of a project (Crewe & Harrison, 1998).

The permeation of neoliberal approaches to tourism is also visible within the state and private sectors. As expounded by Schilcher,

³⁸ Turner (2007) asks this question during her study of Hmong people involved in textile commodity chains in north-western Viet Nam. This question is very applicable to CBT.

“organisations that need more tourism are bound to emphasise tourism’s pro-poor potential to donors while promoting neoliberal approaches in which the industry can flourish. Suggestions to ‘make tourism more pro-poor’ therefore mostly take the form of voluntary codes of conduct, declarations and calls for public-private partnership – all soft law approaches avoiding disruptions to growth and systemic change – which would require governments or a supranational body to interfere with market forces” (2007, p. 174).

Schilcher’s argument can be seen in the example of the Responsible Travel Club, where members have a code of conduct, call for increased partnerships with development agencies, and some companies are investigating public-private partnerships with community lodges. These measures are all ‘soft law’ approaches that will not impact on the ability of the tourism industry to flourish.

According to Schilcher, “appealing to corporate social responsibility and codes of conduct constitutes the ultimate neoliberal ‘pro-poor tourism’ strategy. In this scenario, governments refrain completely from interfering with market forces in order to stimulate ‘growth for poverty alleviation,’ hence shifting responsibility for being ‘pro-poor’ back to the private sector (2007, p. 179). However as one tour operator opined, rules are what it will take to make tourism more pro-poor and responsible towards host communities:

“There are numerous, hundreds of smaller mom and pop operators, that couldn’t care less [about responsible tourism], and they’re in it for the business. So we could be highlighting all of our best practices that we should follow, but no one else is going to follow them, unless the government steps in and says right, we’re going to make this law, and we’re going to make this law and everyone is going to follow it. No questions. I mean that’s really what it’s going to come down to” (Simon, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).

In the Vietnamese context, although legislative steps have been taken towards making the tourism industry more environmentally, socially and culturally sustainable, as yet there are no enforceable guidelines or rules to apply.

Counter-hegemonic discourses of economy do exist in north-west Viet Nam that depart from neoliberal patterns. In their attempt to move beyond neoliberal capitalist economies, Gibson-Graham (2006, pp. 80-81) encourage a language of economic diversity that includes non-profit organisations, community development organisations, and community co-operatives. Development agencies are engaging in these alternative discourses through the encouragement and establishment of village funds, community benefit-sharing mechanisms and management boards, which contrast sharply with capitalist business models that promote individualism. The question is then; can these non-capitalist forms survive in the competitive neoliberal environment of tourism? The challenge for researchers is to make these alternatives more visible.

Chapter summary

This chapter has drawn heavily on insights from Escobar (1995a) and Ferguson's (1994) seminal texts that criticise 'the development apparatus' and expose the hegemonic development discourse that continues to underpin how development is understood, conceptualised and enacted today. After providing a brief introduction to the historical context to the development of this discourse, the chapter introduced some of the key elements of the discursive space of development, including the creation of the notion of the 'Third World' and the emergence of a politics of knowledge that underlies and legitimises development activities. Taking the postdevelopment stance that "particular ways of thinking and speaking about the 'Third World' have in turn made possible and legitimised certain practices and interventions towards these parts of the globe" (Power, 2003, p. 86), the chapter then moved on to explore some of the dominant discourses circulating within community-based tourism in north-western Viet Nam.

Drawing primarily on interview material, but also existing academic research, project documents and tourism advertising material, the chapter outlined how the heterogeneity of all key human actors in the CBT actor-network is denied in favour of 'imagined

communities.’ In the case of host communities in particular, local people are conceptualised as homogenously poor, passive, authentic, supportive of tourism, and unable to enter the tourism industry without assistance. Such homogenising discourses “can delimit the possible, tending to steer thought and action in a particular direction” (Bramwell, 2006, p. 961) and thus has material effects such as denying agency, as well as legitimising the activities of other actors. In different ways, government authorities, tour operators and development agencies are also all treated as fairly homogenous entities by other actors in the actor-network.

The chapter then moved on to introduce the concept of knowledge communities, to bolster Escobar (1995a) and Ferguson’s (1994) perspectives on the politics of knowledge in development discourse that continually problematises development, legitimises intervention, and provides a space for the activities of ‘experts.’ It is clear that knowledge politics are key to CBT activities, with dominant discourses assuming local people have no knowledge or capacity to implement tourism without assistance, treating knowledge as a fixed commodity and a simple process of transfer, and privileging external knowledge over local knowledge. As Foucault identified, knowledge and power are inseparable, and the final section of the chapter explored some of the discourses of power and politics that were dominant in the research data. The next chapter builds on this discourse analysis to explore relations of power in CBT in more depth, with a focus on how relations of power influence material outcomes in the CBT actor-networks.

Chapter 5

(Un)stable, (Un)predictable, (Un)noticed? Power relations in CBT actor-networks

“An explicit, calculated program of intervention is not invented ab initio. It is traversed by the will to improve, but it is not the product of a singular intention or will. It draws upon and is situated within a heterogenous assemblage or dispositif that combines ‘forms of practical knowledge, with modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority, forms of judgement, architectural forms, human capacities, non-human objects and devices, inscriptions, techniques and so forth’” (Li, 2007, p. 6 quoting Rose, 1999, p. 52)

Introduction

Powerful discourses naturalise particular views of reality and are embedded in power relations. As articulated by McEwan,

“Discourses shape the contours of the ‘taken-for-granted world’; they are produced and reproduced through representations to naturalize and universalize a particular view of the world and to position subjects in it. Discourses always provide partial, situated knowledges. They are embedded in power relations, but are always open to contestation. Moreover, discourse determined what it is possible to say, the criteria of ‘truth’, who is allowed to speak with authority and where such speech can be spoken” (2009, p. 122).

In using discourse analysis as a methodological tool, I have been anxious to avoid the tendency of much postcolonial and postdevelopment research, which persist in focusing on discourse(s) at the expense of material realities (McEwan, 2009), and often assume too

simplistically that a change in discourse will result in a change in reality (Azcarate, 2006). Repeating a quote used earlier, Ferguson warned researchers of this temptation:

“When we deal with planned intervention by power parties, however, it is tempting to see in the discourse and intentions of such parties the logic that defines the train of events. Such a vein, however, inevitably misrepresents the complexities of the involvement of intentionality with events. Intentions, even of power actors or interests, are only the visible part of a much larger mechanism through which structures are actually produced, reproduced and transformed” (1994, p. 276).

The actor-network approach of this thesis provides a way of making more visible the ‘much larger mechanism’ through which discourses are (re)produced, and within which intervention by development agencies in CBT occurs. Discourses not only shape worldviews through what *is* said, but through what is *not*. Powerful discourses may act to conceal counter-hegemonic discourses, thus contributing to the creation of ‘black boxes’ within actor-networks. As introduced in chapter two, a ‘black box’ in ANT terminology is a part or entirety of an actor-network that is accepted and taken for granted (Latour, 1987). The creation of black boxes, and their reopening revolves around power relations. To explore how power relations emerge and evolve within a network, Jonathan Murdoch’s (1998) concept of ‘spaces of prescription’ and ‘spaces of negotiation’ provides a useful theoretical framework around which this chapter is structured.

Using Murdoch’s prescription/negotiation framework, this chapter builds on the discourse analysis of chapter four and the translation study of chapter three, to explore the material outcomes of circulating discourses on CBT actor-networks. Keeping Ferguson’s advice (in the quote above) in mind, the chapter demonstrates how actor-network theory can help identify counter-hegemonic practices, rather than just merely expected practices (Azcarate, 2006).

Murdoch's spaces

Over the last decade many geographers have applied ANT perspectives to their work (see for example, Latham, 2002; Murdoch, 1997; 1998; 2000; Ruming, 2009; Thrift, 1996; Whatmore, 2002), surpassing more traditional ideas about networks that have dominated geographical research in the last four decades (Bosco, 2006). Jonathan Murdoch was one of the earliest geographers to use actor-network theory and contributed much to the ANT literature, particularly by highlighting the usefulness of the approach to spatial analysis and rural studies. In ANT, space is a relational effect of an actor-network. Some ANT proponents consider geography to be a hindrance to ANT, specifically perceptions of space as fixed and absolute (Bosco, 2006; Law, 1999; Murdoch, 1998). Murdoch's work (1998, p. 358) seeks to show how

“ANT redefines ‘geography’ for it overthrows the ‘tyranny of distance’ (Latour, 1997), a beast which tends to impose a single conception of undifferentiated space upon variable landscapes of relations and connections. In its place actor-network theorists celebrate a geography of topologies (Mol & Law, 1994).”

However Murdoch himself admits that geographical approaches to space are not as distant from ANT approaches as Law (1999) and Latour (1997 in Murdoch, 1998) imply. Spatial analysis in geography has been increasingly understood from a relational perspective, with scholars encouraging us to “see place and the connections between society and space relationally, as constantly produced and situated” (Massey et al., 1999 in Bosco, 2006, p. 142). The widely accepted geographical concepts of ‘time-space compression’ (Harvey, 1989) and ‘time-space distancing’ (Giddens, 2000) invoke a relational approach to space. Massey developed these ideas further by imagining places as “articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings” (1991, p. 28). Thus, as Murdoch summarises, “the practice of geography becomes concerned with an understanding of the processes which give rise to particular spaces and times” (1998, p. 359). A literature review of the geographical approaches to space and spatial analysis is beyond the scope of this research; the purpose of this discussion is to argue that applying

ANT to geographical research is not a radical departure from the direction of recent theories on space and place in human geography. Instead, ANT builds on the common ground with geography adding a focus on networks, analysing “how social *and* material processes (subjects, objects and relations) become seamlessly entwined within complex sets of association” (*ibid.*, emphasis in original).

Conceptual understandings of space and place are also crucial to how we understand tourism and mobility. Traditional approaches to tourism studies have often focused on the ‘tourism activity’ as a discrete local event (Alneng, 2002) and ‘the tourist site’ as a territorially bounded destination that acts as a stage for tourist performances (Johannesson, 2005). This obscures the processes, relationships and transformations that are continually occurring in any tourism activity, and in particular draws attention away from the interconnection of the tourism activity with different places, scales and spaces. The benefits of applying ANT to tourism studies have been discussed more generally in chapter two; what Murdoch offers us to assist with this chapter is an analytical device to “render more clearly the spatial complexities of ANT” (1998, p. 364). Using what Murdoch calls ‘spaces of prescription’ and ‘spaces of negotiation’ we may gain greater insight into the power relations that allow a tourism activity to cohere across time and space.

In Murdoch’s ‘spaces of prescription,’ behaviour within an actor-network is fairly stable and predictable. The existence of these spaces contributes to all or part of an actor-network being more durable across time and space. Although akin to ANT’s concept of ‘black boxing,’ the concept of spaces of prescription (alongside an exploration of spaces of negotiation) provides greater scope for understanding the connections and fluidity between the two spaces. Spaces of negotiation refer to links in the actor-network that are fluid, unstable, provisional and divergent. In these spaces, “various components of the network continually re-negotiate with one another, form variable and revisable coalitions, and assume ever-changing shapes” (Callon, 1992 in Murdoch, 1998). Negotiation is not an external process to be utilised by actors for political convenience (Cupples et al., 2007), rather

“it is a mode of existence, something intrinsic to the groups that take part in the social drama. Negotiation is located within collective subjectivity, in the

most unconscious culture of politics and daily life” (Canclini, 2001, p. 146 in Cupples et al., 2007, p. 789).

Exploring these spaces of negotiation demonstrates the complexities of the creation of the actor-network(s), the multiple identities involved and the continual process of translation. Butler argues that “the exercise of power is temporalised, made up of continuous repetition and reiteration of ritualized practices that necessarily involve interruptions and productive intervals of discontinuity” (1997 in Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 24). She contends that it is during these interruptions that new opportunities for new becomings emerge. Studying these ‘interruptions’ occurring within spaces of negotiation is therefore significant as they “indicate where alternative narratives might emerge” (Davies, 2003, p. 213) or are indeed already emerging.

In Murdoch’s words,

“focusing on spaces of prescription and negotiation may then allow us to address some rather fundamental questions about network construction (using the traditional tools of ANT) while at the same time taking into account those actors who are only partially connected to, or have slipped in between, the striated folds of networked space-time” (1998, p. 364).

This approach draws attention to the role of negotiation and multiplicity in actor-networks, highlighting the struggles over definitions of space and the power relations that control the arrangements of actors. As Murdoch states, “tracing the topology of networks is therefore akin to tracing the topology of power for whoever succeeds in defining the order of priorities succeeds in determining the connections which give rise to the spatialities and temporalities that compose our world” (1998, p. 370). This chapter explores several examples each of spaces of prescription and negotiation. Threaded through the discussion is a focus on the power relations that underpin the relationships.

The conduct of conduct: Foucault and governmentality

Underpinning all interactions within CBT actor-networks, including spaces of prescription and negotiation, are power relations. As introduced in chapter two, power in ANT is a relational effect, drawn from the ways that resources are mobilised and deployed across diverse scales of time and space (van der Duim, 2005). Although particular actors may appear intrinsically powerful, power in ANT is only 'possessed' through relational constitution. Analyses of power in tourism must go deeper however, to acknowledge how different modes of power co-exist in tourism spaces. Allen (2003, p. 102) discusses how manipulation, authority, domination and seduction are specific modes of power that are mediated in space and time, just as the exercise of power is. Not only do these different modes of power co-exist in tourism spaces, but at every occasion in an actor-network where power is exercised, the *mode* of power may take different forms at different stages which cannot be known in advance (*ibid*). The co-existence and transformation of these modes of power contributes to the overlapping of and slippages between spaces of prescription and negotiation, and the mobilisation of agency.

Foucault's concept of 'government' is one particular method for exploring how relations of power emerge from CBT actor-networks. As introduced earlier in this thesis, Foucault's 'government' is understood as the "conduct of conduct" or the attempt to "shape human conduct by calculated means" (Li, 2007, p. 5). CBT tends to operate as a form of governance, encouraging "a particular way of knowing people and things in pertinent parts of the world and identifies appropriate sorts of action and inaction in a potent and even authoritative way" (West & Carrier, 2004, p. 485). Put more simply, tourism translations produce particular understandings and strategies about the way CBT should be practiced.

Governmentality can also be understood as a 'problematizing' activity. It often emerges through 'programmes' that are justified by and inextricably tied to the dominant discourses in that particular field (Rose, 1989 in Wearing & McDonald, 2002, pp. 197-8). This chapter builds on the discourse analysis of chapter four to investigate how the mentalities and rationalities of powerful actors in CBT are framed within 'regimes of truth,' which are

inextricably tangled with governmental practices. These practices and truths are mutually constitutive (Huxley, 2007).

In order to identify some of the power relations at play that allows CBT to govern particular ways of knowing, Foucault suggests looking for the

“routine deployment of techniques – spatial, organizational, classificatory, representational, ethical or otherwise, depending upon the forms of power involved – which seek to mould the conduct of specific groups or individuals and, above all, limit their possible range of actions” (Allen, 2003, p. 67).

A study of governmentality in CBT would explore the calculated techniques that shape the conduct of others in spaces of prescription. However, as this chapter will show, there is always space for new opportunities to emerge. The following analysis of the spaces of prescription and negotiation in the CBT actor-network applies this Foucauldian perspective on governmentality in order to understand how ‘the conduct of conduct’ by actors in the CBT actor-network is both enabling and constraining for material CBT outcomes.

Spaces of Prescription

In the following section I use three examples of prescribed spaces within the CBT actor-network in Viet Nam. The examples are very different, ranging from a discussion about the difficulties in defining sustainable tourism and CBT, to the impact of neopopulist principles on the style of development assistance and the spatiality of development imaginaries. The third example explores how the anticipated potential of the private sector remains static and unimaginative, effectively constraining CBT opportunities and outcomes. The purpose of investigating these examples of spaces of prescription is four-fold: firstly to illustrate empirically how Murdoch’s ‘spaces’ framework is a useful tool for revealing exclusions and ambiguities that emerge from translation processes, secondly to use Foucault’s concept of governmentality to understand how ‘the conduct of conduct’ is applied in CBT actor-networks, thirdly to illustrate the implications that black boxing has for the actor-network, and fourthly to understand how spaces of prescription lead to limitations on the commercial viability of a CBT initiative.

In exploring the conduct of conduct in the CBT actor-network, Allen urges us to investigate the techniques of power that work as normalising forces. He argues that “the art of government rests upon the continuous and relatively stable presence of a series of ideals, expectations, received ‘truths’, standards and frameworks which provoke individuals to govern their lives in quite particular ways” (2003, p. 82). One such ‘technique’ of power is discursive representation and classification of an actor or group of actors by another actor(s), and therefore this chapter builds on the discourse analysis of chapter four.

It is noted that with the time limitations of a one-year thesis and a six week field research period, I cannot hope to understand, or describe all spaces of prescription. I am acutely aware of the politics of analysing and writing about these spaces, and the likelihood of my own positionality making me blind to some black boxed areas.

The ideal state of CBT

Chapter four discussed the problematic usage of the terms sustainable tourism, community-based tourism and responsible tourism – all terms that are used widely and interchangeably by different actors in Viet Nam. Different actors shape their activities and legitimise their actions based on their definition of these terms. Despite the interpretative inconsistencies, these terms have become so ubiquitous and have naturalised in such a way that sustainable tourism and CBT are rarely appreciated as value laden terms reflecting specific (western) ideologies. Within CBT discourses in Viet Nam, and scholarship more generally, the prescribed space focuses on the definition and methods of implementing CBT, with little attention given to a significant issue – the long term sustainability of CBT. This is clearly articulated by Xu et al. (2008, p. 64, emphasis added):

“An ideal community based tourism model is often described as a form of tourism where the local community has substantial control over, and involvement in, its development and management, and a major proportion of the benefits remain within the community. *Yet, it also does not address whether the state is in dynamic stable condition leading towards*

sustainability. The ideal state may be in a disequilibrium condition that is moving towards collapse."

The homestay model of community-based tourism is an excellent example through which to explore this unquestioned issue of long-term sustainability. It also demonstrates the importance of non-human actors in the actor-network.

The homestay model emerged in response to tourist desires for an authentic experience of 'traditional' life. The perception of authenticity is created through the positioning of specific non-human actors: the architectural styles, the traditional clothing unique to each ethnic minority group, use of buffalo for agriculture, existence of terraced rice paddies; all of which provide insight into 'the way things used to be' (Cohen, 2002; West & Carrier, 2004) and are subjected to the 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 2002). Some 'traditional' artefacts and human forms become more durable as a result of tourism, becoming culturally viable due to tourist demand for authenticity. Yet cultural stasis is required to maintain this condition. With CBT based on tourism *for* development and 'progress,' CBT is inherently contradictory to discourses of authenticity (Azcarate, 2006). A successful community based tourism model will inevitably raise incomes in a village, such that some of the non-human actors listed above may change in a way that is perceived to be less authentic by tourists³⁹. Examples of conflicting desires include architectural styles: the Vietnamese dream is to have a concrete house, which is unlikely to capture the imagination of tourists in quite the same way as a bamboo stilt house (Stevens, 2010). Similarly, western style clothing is slowly being incorporated into villages such as Ban Ho as a result of tourism (Ut, homestay owner, pers. comm., 2010) yet it is the colourful traditional dress of the ethnic minority groups that are popular with tourists as evident in many tourism brochures for Lao Cai province. This discussion is not to suggest that these people and communities should be denied the opportunity for change; it is to point out the paradox facing CBT planners as the homestay model of CBT inevitably encourages changes that may lessen the value of the destination for

³⁹ It is acknowledged that in some cases, the entire tourism product and experience may entail 'staged authenticity' (MacCannell, 1973), making a host community less vulnerable to the type of change (and consequential impact on tourism) discussed here.

tourism. Using Xu et al.'s terminology (2008, p. 64), the ideal state of a CBT homestay model is inherently a disequilibrium condition heading towards collapse.

I consider this issue to be a space of prescription, albeit a unique one. Prescribed ways of defining CBT have created discursive limits, thus creating an uncontested arena where the long term sustainability of CBT initiatives remains unquestioned, or at least unplanned. The following extract from an interview with a development agency employee illustrates that CBT can rarely be a stable condition:

K: Do you think that community based tourism is really sustainable long term? If the model works well, and the incomes in a village increase so that over time the village modernises, and I use that word carefully, do you think then that western tourists will be less keen to go there, because part of what they want to see is that it's really different?

J: I think there's a few challenges. There is a village that we work with in Sa Pa called Ban Ho⁴⁰, which is quite interesting when you go there...

K: I've actually been there.

J: It's quite touristy, and you just see what happens, you know in 2001 there were no tourists and in 2010 there are a lot of tourists, and it kind of kills the experience to a certain degree. So I think that's one issue, just going somewhere you know people want to get away from other people and then they turn up at a village and you know, there's up to 100 tourists there a night in that village. Another thing is, how you actually keep the village look the same, you know, the local people, quite rightly, have got aspirations to modernise and things, they tend to build concrete buildings which will make it unattractive but I think that's something that can be managed through good

⁴⁰ See case study one, in chapter three.

understanding. You can keep modern interiors and keep traditional looking exteriors for example, so it can be managed with understanding.

K: So that's just about education, explaining to the villagers what it is that western tourists are wanting from the experience?

J: Yeah, and I think that's why that management board and things, having someone who can actually help it through that process, is important. The other thing is that I think people will keep moving on to find probably the next places but some areas might have that appeal that will eventually become tourism centres and I think Mai Chau, if you go there, is that sort of example. It's not an area that I think people will move on from, I think what you'll find is that you'll get more investment around it, but some of those other villages, maybe over time they'll just fade away from the tourism scene.

The concern that crowded destinations become less attractive to tourists who are after remote or new 'authentic' experiences is very real in Sa Pa district. Many interviewees spoke of the changes in Sa Pa that are now beginning to impact on tourist numbers:

"Sa Pa has become the mass destination, it has lost the charm of CBT, it is not the niche destination anymore. Yes, too many tourists" (Minh, government official, pers. comm., 2010)

"Sa Pa I think has reached its peak and it's going to start dropping off because the feedback that we get is more negative than positive, and a lot of our clients are asking us 'where else can we go, where we're not hassled and followed by people trying to sell us things?'" (Simon, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).

This is in no way a new phenomenon; however the absence of discussions about these future possibilities from CBT definitions is of significance. We see here how the power of a particular discursive space can black box particular issues, such as the long term sustainability of CBT. This has implications for the design of tourism interventions. Are host communities aware that CBT may reach a peak and then slowly decline as popularity of

their CBT ironically is a factor in the decline in tourist numbers? Are host communities aware that changes to non-human actors such as the specific architectural style of a house may in time be negatively viewed by tourists? Do CBT facilitators (such as development agencies) factor the long term possibilities into their planning? While it is not necessarily a negative outcome if CBT is a relatively short term activity, it is of course closely linked to commercial viability and therefore this issue is not something that should be black boxed.

When considering the long-term sustainability of CBT, successful CBT is clearly a dynamic process and is unlikely to remain stable. Without detailed planning for long-term sustainability, we can see in the Sa Pa examples that 'successful' CBT initiatives are now challenged by outcomes of the success, such as overcrowding, or tourist displeasure at domestic architectural changes (enabled by increased incomes). Thus not only are CBT initiatives often commercially unviable due to a number of circumstantial and operational conditions, but many CBT initiatives may become commercially unviable after a period of success.

Neopopulism and the absence of broader development goals

The lack of attention given to the long term outcomes of CBT is the principal issue with the next space of prescription in the CBT actor-network – the relationship between CBT initiatives, neopopulism and broader development goals of the region or nation. Neopopulist perspectives “focus on people in local contexts and on small-scale bottom-up strategies for their development,” advocating for local communities to be central to planning and decision-making (Scheyvens, 2002, pp. 52-53). From a neopopulist perspective “tourism *for* development means tourism for development of Third World peoples, not tourism for the development of the industry itself” (*ibid.*, p. 52). In a critical review of ecotourism, Butcher (2007) considers that choices for social change at the national level are declining despite increased local participation in decision making. CBT is grounded in the neopopulist paradigm; grounded in discourses and material realities of ‘grass roots approaches,’ public participation and bottom-up decision making. This section discusses how prescribed ways of understanding participatory processes are limiting not only for participation itself, but for achieving broader development goals and achieving long-term commercial viability for CBT initiatives.

The western paradigm of democracy has long influenced the activities of development agencies and NGOs in the 'third world.' These organisations are seen as vehicles for the establishment of democratic processes and as essential components of civil society (Edwards & Hulme, 1996b, p. 2). Despite regular criticism in academic literature for poor conduct of participatory processes (Cooke & Kothari, 2001a; Mowforth & Munt, 2003; Tembo, 2003), it is important to note that these participatory processes are rarely subject to critical analysis as a concept – only as an operational practice (Butcher, 2007). Here lies a space of prescription - public participation in decision making has been discursively constructed as a normative good, with the methods of implementation being the major focus of attention.

To provide some context, historically Viet Nam has not provided a receptive stage for introducing the ideals of active community participation and the top-down style of governance continues to impede public consultation and community participation. As Catford notes, development assistance at the village and commune level was tightly controlled by the provincial and district People's Committees and "all major decisions up until 1998 were made by the district and provincial officials. Villagers explained that they had little or no say in the choice of development activities, their location and the means of implementation" (2006, p. 6). The passing of the historic decree *Regulations on the Exercise of Democracy in Communes* (Decree No. 29/1998/ND-CP) has changed the foundations of local government power in favour of community participation; however in reality the top-down approach to governance and decision-making remains dominant and the Decree has had little impact (Catford, 2006). The top-down approach to decision making spreads beyond the government sector into the private sector. For example, when questioned if potential host communities are asked if they want tourism, a Hanoi tour operator replied "for sure, before we start with any areas, especially when we do what we call responsible travel, we have to ask, 'do you like it or not?'" (Thao, pers. comm., 2010). Significantly, Thao then went on to describe the ways in which his company subsequently attempts to convince potential host communities of the merits of tourism, which suggests that the consultation undertaken is very token.

Development agency assistance in Viet Nam often includes activities that attempt to contest the existing hegemonic governance style in attempts to forge new discourses and material realities of participation. However these efforts are tempered by socio-political realities that influence the ability of development agencies to effectively engage with local communities via participatory processes. As Stevens (2010, p. 452) explains in the Vietnamese context, “when INGOs initiate a community based tourism project, they usually do so through established channels of power. Often they are legally unable to access a community except through these channels.” In relation to her experience with Counterpart International’s work in Viet Nam, Stevens writes:

“for Counterpart to operate legally as an INGO in Vietnam it has to respect and utilize established systems of governance. Project planning had to begin from the top down. Counterpart’s consensus-building strategy was to first seek the participation of provincial authorities and work through the power structure, building understanding and initiating dialogue in a politically sensitive manner” (2010, p. 460).

It is clearly a balancing act for development agencies, as they attempt to follow their organisational ideologies concerning local participation in decision-making, whilst abiding by existing power structures in order to obtain or retain satisfactory political relationships.

Social realities at the local level also influence the extent and success of participatory processes. Dominant discourses that frame local people (particularly ethnic minority groups living in remote areas) as very passive⁴¹ contribute to expectations that participatory processes will struggle to engage widely with host communities. The Asian Development Bank reported that ethnic minority groups in Viet Nam tend to accept ‘development from outside’ without question or participation (2002, p. 19). Timothy (1999, in Xu et al., 2008) suggests that centralised political structures in Asian countries may lead to some passivity in decision-making, with individuals and communities perceiving the creation of economic development opportunities to be the government’s duty. Although a

⁴¹ See chapter four for a discussion on imagined communities and discourses of passivity.

study of the barriers to effective engagement with local communities in decision making is not included here; it is important to note that participatory processes at the local level are in their infancy in Viet Nam, which renders the connection between remotely located communities and national level decision making very weak indeed.

Neopopulist discourses and the realities of 'grass roots' participatory approaches have socio-spatial implications. These discourses and practices frame CBT as local and bounded, creating an imagined space where social transformation occurs at the village level (Ilcan & Phillips, 2010). Yet CBT is inextricably linked to the global system for linkages such as markets, development agencies and funding. Gibson-Graham (2002) explores this global/local binary in the context of economic politics. They note the construction of globalism as an abstract space, where expansive and inventive capitalism occurs to facilitate the frictionless movement of money and commodities (2002, p. 27). In contrast, localism is constructed as a physical place of community and bounded identity, where traditional forms of non-capitalist in-situ labour occur (*ibid.*). That globalism and localism derive their meaning from each other is yet to be discursively and practically embraced in the development literature more generally and in Viet Nam specifically. In the context of Vietnamese tourism the impact and connection of small-scale Vietnamese tourism to global markets was particularly evident during my fieldwork in 2010, where both the global economic recession and the eruption of a volcano in Iceland curtailed tourist activities in ways that rapidly reverberated through the entire CBT actor-network. This discursive disassociation of CBT from regional, national global systems limits the potential for CBT to become part of greater regional or national development plans and is a contributing factor to the poor levels of commercial viability in CBT.

The framing of CBT as local and bounded is reinforced by the pattern of development assistance in tourism as 'case by case' interventions. The extent to which development assistance on a case by case basis contributes to wider development goals of a region or country is a hugely debatable issue in the development literature (Butcher, 2007) and also among CBT stakeholders in Viet Nam. The broader development goals of a country or region usually form part of the strategic goals for development assistance initiatives, however in the context of CBT in Viet Nam it is the government's contention that

“so far they are mostly involved in a case by case basis. If we really look for the boom of CBT, we should go from the up down, not spot by spot, because then you cannot solve the problem, you just solve the problem of one village, one village or two or three, or at most ten villages. If you want to cater for something like ten thousand villages of Viet Nam, you have to go from the government” (Minh, government official, pers. comm., 2010).

SNV, the most active development agency in tourism in north-west Viet Nam, has in recent years shifted its focus from case by case assistance towards capacity building. In the words of a SNV tourism advisor,

“we try not to do everything ourselves, we try and take a step back and don’t do the stuff on the ground, which means we want to involve the province [government], and you also want to involve other consultants, so what we don’t want to do is get in and do the work” (SNV, pers. comm., 2010).

This approach has met with mixed reactions, with a government official in Sa Pa saying

“now they [SNV] based a lot on the technical and I think the policy for SNV is quite strict, for example they spent a lot in the meeting and conference at the high level. They spend a lot of money for meeting for the experts and advisor, and only a little bit comes to the project, to the communities. I think that’s a very hard policy and I think that should change” (Bao, Sa Pa government official, pers. comm., 2010).

The majority of other development agency initiatives work on a case by case basis, with varying degrees of capacity building initiatives built in.

In north-western Viet Nam, interviews suggest that development assistance in homestay CBT is invariably focused on the immediate outcomes at the community level, with little connection to regional or national development outcomes. This is a space of prescription - a space where the behaviour of the development agency and some tour operator actors is predictable: participatory processes are promoted as a normative good, social

transformation is only discussed at the village or commune level, and case by case approaches focus on immediate short term outcomes with little apparent connection to wider development goals. Butcher argues that neopopulist approaches and case by case interventions privilege local views over national views in development, with the effect of limiting conceptualisations of development potential and representing a retreat from discussions about 'throughgoing development' (2007, p. 165). Future efforts to increase linkages between local development goals and those at the regional and national level may well improve the commercial viability of CBT (and associated poverty reduction) in Viet Nam, which is worthy of further research.

Every space of prescription has inherent potential for a space of negotiation to reveal itself or open up; particularly when actors seek to redefine their roles or new actors enter the actor-network. In this example, future negotiation is expected between different actors over how to deal with differing local and national development priorities (Butcher, 2007). Also, with participatory processes still a relatively new concept for many individuals in Viet Nam, increasingly familiarity with the concept is likely to result in increased local engagement in decision making in the future.

Private sector potential

Many interview participants were of the view that development agency assistance will be necessary to develop CBT in Viet Nam in the foreseeable future. Although having gained strength over the last decade; civil society in Viet Nam remains weak (Norlund, 2007). This is the nub of another space of prescription within the CBT actor-network in Viet Nam – that donor and/or development agency assisted CBT is the most efficient form of CBT. However Harrison and Schipani (2007) dispute this assumption, showing via an in-depth study of CBT in Laos that the potential of the private sector to independently contribute to poverty alleviation is frequently underrated. Although the private sector referred to throughout this thesis has usually meant tour operators, in Harrison and Schipani's research the private sector includes owners of small hotels, restaurants, commercial food growers and harvesters (fishermen for example), transportation operators, and forms of tourist entertainment such as bicycle or inflated inner tube rental.

The authors chart the rapid expansion of small, locally-owned tourism related businesses that has occurred since the introduction of a market-orientated economy in Laos in 1986. These businesses have not benefited from support from either the government or international agencies. Indeed, Harrison and Schipani suggest that the private sector has been viewed with some suspicion by development agencies and the government sector, as is the case in Viet Nam⁴². The authors go on to compare the pro-poor contributions of an internationally funded and supported community-based tourism project called the Nam Ha Ecotourism Project⁴³, with those of the tourism-related private sector on the Mekong River island of Don Det. In exploring the similarities and differences it was clear that there were some areas where the private sector could learn from the ethos of CBT, whilst in other areas such as market demand and reaching the majority of tourists the private sector has much to contribute. Harrison and Schipani conclude that

“instead of automatically assuming that tourism enterprises in the private sector are unwelcome and inferior competitors of ‘alternative’ donor-assisted, community-based tourism projects, they might be considered as potential partners in tourism development, with their own expertise and links to the community, and with an entitlement to at least some of the financial and technical support provided, on a regular basis, by international aid agencies” (2007, p. 226).

In this example Harrison and Schipani are trying to prise apart the black box that limits the role of the private sector in CBT in Laos. Viet Nam too has a space of prescription where the potential of the private sector in CBT is limited by a number of techniques of power. Both state and non-governmental actors in the CBT actor-network have little faith in the ability of the private sector to contribute to CBT. Dominant discourses that paint the private sector as unpredictable and solely profit-driven create conceptual limitations on the possibilities of new partnerships between key actors.

⁴² See discussion in chapter three.

⁴³ The Nam Ha Ecotourism Project commenced in 1999, with significant financial contributions from the Asian Development Bank and the New Zealand Agency for International Development. Widely heralded as a successful model of community-based, pro-poor tourism, the project is still funded by donors so the long-term economic sustainability is unproven and uncertain (Harrison & Schipani, 2007).

The expectation and perceived truth that effective CBT requires development assistance is created and perpetuated discursively, acting as a technique of power to ensure the 'conduct of conduct' and effectively constraining CBT possibilities. Opening this space of prescription would enable spaces of negotiation to open up, for new possibilities of different actor-network configurations, or entirely new actor-networks. In doing so, there may be a space for more effective involvement of the private sector (not just tour operators) in partnerships with development agencies and ultimately greater gains for the commercial viability of CBT initiatives.

Influencing the potential for new partnerships to succeed is the vertical nature of socialist policies in Viet Nam. Socialist states often attempt to direct the activities of mass movements in vertical ways, which is evident in Viet Nam through the persistent state control over mass organisations such as Womens Unions and the Viet Nam National Farmers Union. A full investigation of the impact of government policies on CBT is beyond the scope of this research, which is unfortunate as the literature examining tourism development in communist and post-communist societies lacks conceptual and theoretical strength (Hall, 2001). However, the following summary of the government's attitude towards the private sector shows how this space of prescription has historical and political connections.

The centralised bureaucracy of Vietnamese socialism, combined with inflexibility towards individualism and entrepreneurialism was initially very constraining for tourism development in communist Viet Nam (Hall, 2001; Lloyd, 2004). The private sector was suppressed by the central government until *doi moi* began, after which the sector has been alternatively tolerated, discouraged and treated with apprehension (Masina, 2006). Only after the Asian regional economic crisis did the Vietnamese government take decisive action to encourage private sector development, pushing through new legislation which immediately resulted in a burgeoning of private enterprise (Masina, 2006; St John, 2006). Significantly, in the context of tourism development, access to credit remains unequal in favour of state owned enterprises. In exploring the reluctance of the Vietnamese government to support unrestrained development of the private sector, Masina (2006, p. 125) suggests the reluctance stems from fear that "the private sector may be considered as

a vehicle for foreign capital domination.” Becoming an entrepreneur is far more empowering for individuals and businesses than being a development beneficiary, and “the emergence of a capitalist private sector may be perceived as a challenge to the state’s authority and ultimately as a factor of political destabilization” (*ibid*). The Vietnamese government’s open support for tourism as a means of economic development, hampered by the hesitations Masina describes, is only one of many contradictions occurring at this intersection of socialism and neoliberalism. Although the government’s position can be read as creating prescribed spaces for manoeuvre of actors, the contradictions in policy positions also allows negotiated spaces to open up. Of consequence for CBT is that government support for private sector developments or private sector partnerships with development agencies is unpredictable, which has significant implications for planners. As government support may not always be forthcoming, the capacity of actors in the CBT actor-network to shift and reshuffle their positions in imaginative ways is limited.

Spaces of Negotiation

Unsanctioned homestays

On the surface it would appear that tour operators and local government use constraining techniques of power to control the conduct of local people in their interactions with tourists (Allen, 2003), particularly in the example of a homestay. These techniques include regulations that require a lodging permit from the government to operate a homestay, regulations (sometimes only at the village level) that overnight guests must be accompanied by a guide, and a number of discursive techniques that portray tour operators as the portal to all interactive experiences with local people. During fieldwork in April 2010 it was my observation that some local people, particularly H’mong women, are quietly contesting these constraints and opening up new spaces of negotiation.

Let us follow Ka’s story, for example. Ka is a H’mong woman from a small village of approximately ten houses, located six hours walk from Sa Pa town and away from the popular trekking routes. She often leaves her husband and three children behind in her village for several days at a time when she walks to Sa Pa town to sell handicrafts. She has learnt some English language skills through her years of interacting with tourists on the streets of Sa Pa. Ka has watched as other people in nearby villages have set up homestays

for trekkers, and have prospered. When interacting with tourists in Sa Pa, Ka now offers them a visit to her home. Only two people (on separate occasions) have taken up her offer to date, and she has written compliments from them that she keeps in her pocket to show other potential guests. Ka's attempts to participate in tourism are not unique. During my visit to Sa Pa town in April 2010 I was asked on several occasions by different H'mong women, if I would like to visit their homes in nearby villages. Although possibly just coincidental, this never occurred during my visit to Sa Pa town three years prior. Others have noted how improving English skills are opening up opportunities for ethnic minority people in Sa Pa district to participate more widely and more directly in tourism (Hanh, 2008) and Ka's story is illustrative of how the CBT homestay actor-network can be fluid and unpredictable. Despite strict political controls some of these local women are finding spaces of negotiation to enable themselves to enter the network, however precarious and illegal this repositioning might be.

Tourists too, are active within this space of negotiation. The CBT homestay actor-network functions around the expectation that tourists will act predictably, such as visiting homestays as part of a tour. When tourists behave unexpectedly (by accompanying Ka back to her village for example), it has the potential to reshuffle and reconfigure the entire actor-network, as other actors (tour operators for example) are forced to redefine their roles or accommodate new actors. This reshuffling has implications for the commercial viability of CBT, as supply patterns shift and tourist movements change. These spaces of negotiation show that in any actor-network there is no guarantee that any seemingly powerful actor can exert that power intact across different spatial and temporal scales.

In every site of power, Foucault emphasised that resistance was simultaneously occurring: if there is no resistance, then no power has been exerted (Hannam, 2002). Tourism and development research has traditionally represented sites of power and resistance through a dominating/dominated dichotomy, with studies of resistance focusing on large scale explicit anti-tourism movements⁴⁴. This binary thinking and focus on organised resistance conceals the more subtle ways that resistance occurs, such as Ka's

⁴⁴ Anti-tourism activities in Goa are an oft cited example, see Routledge (2001).

story above. As Hannam argues, “the everyday experience and performance of tourism though can also be viewed as a subtle form of resistance to the power-knowledge regimes laid down at various scales by states, NGOs, agents and guides” (2002, p. 232). Viewing CBT through the lens of ANT reveals the subtle forms of power that is exercised by various actors as they resist or seek to redefine their roles – and the modes of power that emerge and transform from every interaction. This is a significant benefit of using ANT in tourism research.

Shifting identities and shifting power relations

The above discussion about new homestay owners entering the actor-network leads into this section about negotiated identities. An actor-network that achieves mobilisation and remains durable requires actors to be predictable and accept the roles assigned to them. However tourism can be viewed as sets of (power) relations that are constantly being remade daily through all kinds of performative and transformative tourism encounters, and therefore it is important not to see identities or (power) relations as static (Cheong & Miller, 2000; Hannam, 2002). Development in general is full of categories that are assigned to individuals and groups, such as ‘poor,’ or ‘underdeveloped’, but people do not always identify with the categories they’re assigned to (Shrestha, 1995). In CBT actor-networks, shifting identities and shifting power relations equate to shifting performances, making durability of the network difficult (Law, 2009). This section will explore this space of negotiation, demonstrating how the identities of key actors in CBT actor-networks are dynamic and constantly shifting, both in resistance to identities assigned to them by other actors, and as part of ongoing cultural and political change.

Some organisations have multiple politicised identities, such as the Vietnamese National Administration of Tourism. VNAT is both a government administration and policy-making department *and* a commercial operator of tourism companies and hotels (Cukier et al., 1999). This dual structure also applies at the provincial and district level and is a conflict of interest that has potential implications for the ease of gaining homestay permits. Development agencies too have multiple identities: they can be simultaneously both market-based actors and important components of civil society (Desai, 2009). SNV in Viet Nam is a useful example to illustrate identity politics and the impact this has on CBT. SNV

has been undergoing institutional change since mid-2008 in Viet Nam. Core funding from the Netherlands government has ceased due to Viet Nam's accession from the United Nation's list of 'least developed countries' (van Rijsoort, 2009) and SNV is now required to generate financial resources through advisory services to clients (such as local government) rather than direct 'on the ground' approaches such as homestay development (Thich, development agency employee, pers. comm., 2010). This change at SNV mirrors trends in development organisations more generally, with increasing numbers of development organisations since the 1990s framing their identity and role as 'intermediaries' or 'brokers' rather than direct providers of technical assistance (Walker et al., 2008). Shifts in identities and roles have enormous implications for the functioning of actor-networks; as power relations change and new relationships are formed. In the case of SNV, successful CBT initiatives now requires SNV to find greater capacity to govern from a distance as their institutional approach no longer provides for direct interaction at grassroots level.

Identities of local people are also dynamic, despite the dominant discourses to the contrary. Thus the perception that tour operators are all-powerful due to their ability to bring tourists to a homestay is destabilised by Ka's atypical entry into homestay tourism as discussed earlier. My fieldwork also revealed examples of some homestays becoming so popular that the owners no longer had to bribe the tour guide to choose their business over others. Now these owners have the option of choosing if and when they want groups to stay. Relations of power have also changed for many young women (particularly of H'mong ethnicity), who after an entire childhood spent selling embroidered handicrafts to tourists in Sa Pa town, now have enough English language skills to be trekking tour guides, elevating their social status in Sa Pa town considerably and providing a more steady income with all the associated lifestyle changes that this brings (Hanh, 2008). In the village of Ban Ho⁴⁵ the fluid nature of identities is clear in the example of Ly, a female homestay owner. Ly's homestay has previously been so busy that she ceased working in the rice paddies in order to cater to the regular overnight tourists. Ceasing to work in the family rice paddies is a significant transformation in a region where the ethnic minority groups are defined by their connection with agricultural production (Taylor, 2007). The construction of a hydro-electric

⁴⁵ See case study 1 in chapter three.

dam has decimated tourist numbers in Ban Ho and now Ly laments “*I am very bored now*” (pers. comm., 2010), as she struggles with a shifting identity that is no longer defined by tourism or agriculture.

Shifting identities within the private sector have the potential to significantly reconfigure power relations. Some tour operators, influenced by global discourses of sustainability and sustainable tourism, are moving to establish weak CBT activities⁴⁶ independently of development agencies such as privately owned community lodges. These tour operators are thus acting in a hybrid role as both tour operator and development agent, creating independent CBT actor-networks that often overlap and sometimes compete with development agency CBT actor-networks. The impacts of this hybrid role that tour operators play are considered in more detail in the following section.

These examples clearly show that key actors in CBT actor-networks in Viet Nam tend to be unstable entities, from the government level, to specific development agencies, to individuals at the local level. As identities shift, actors negotiate their role in an actor-network, resulting in changes reverberating throughout the network that may require a return to the translation process. These fluid identities and the resulting challenges for the stability and durability of the CBT actor-network clearly illustrate why the development of general ‘toolkits’ or ‘guides’ for implementing CBT will be ineffective. Just as the identities of actors are negotiated spaces, so too are the discourses that create particular identities. It is the negotiation of a major CBT discourse that the next section explores.

Negotiating Knowledge

Just as identities are multiple, shifting, and often politicised, so too is knowledge. Chapter four demonstrated that ‘knowledge’ is a key discursive element legitimising many aspects of CBT activities, and underlying power relations in CBT actor-networks. The questions are many: what is CBT knowledge? Who is believed to hold the knowledge? How do they share it? Who is perceived as requiring knowledge? CBT is a relatively new concept in Viet Nam,

⁴⁶ See chapter three for a discussion of the CBT continuum.

and knowledge communities are trying to achieve social closure⁴⁷. This term refers to the tendency for knowledge communities to gradually form a consensus about the meanings of new theories, often occurring discursively and without conclusive evidence (Pinch, 2009). As articulated by Ilcan & Phillips, while the formation of knowledge communities and what constitutes knowledge

“appears to be a process of simply ‘appealing to mutual interests,’ their formation is better understood as a product of what Callon and Latour (1981) term ‘interessement,’ or the assembly of allied interests through calculation, persuasion, intrigue or rhetoric. This process is instilled with multiple objectives and targets for governing through knowledge sharing, and is mobile enough to shape development efforts across a broad array of territories” (2010, p.863).

Knowledge producers such as development agencies are attempting to achieve ‘social closure’ or ‘black boxing’ of CBT knowledge both in terms of definition and ideal forms of CBT. However as this section will discuss, development agencies have failed to fully enrol tour operators in the CBT actor-network, with key issues around CBT knowledge under dispute.

We have seen how CBT as a concept and approach contains uncertainty, particularly over definition and the ideal end state of successful CBT. This is a clear indicator that CBT is situated within a period of interpretative flexibility (Pinch, 1998). These uncertainties lie within uncontested parts of the CBT actor-network, where various knowledge producers such as tour operators and development agencies continue to (re)produce discourses that hide the uncertainties and attempt to circulate particular meanings to achieve social closure (or black boxing to use ANT terminology).

The black box of defining CBT allows some actors (particularly tour operators) to legitimise and market their activities under the global concepts of ‘sustainable tourism’ and

⁴⁷ See chapter four for a more in depth discussion of interpretative flexibility and knowledge communities.

'responsible tourism.' Here lies an interesting and complex intertwining of Murdoch's 'spaces' – alongside spaces of prescription (CBT as a normative good, undefined, no accepted ideal end state) there is also a space of negotiation around CBT knowledge, where tour operators and development agencies are competing for discourse dominance and to form consensus over *their* knowledge production relating to homestay CBT.

In identifying spaces of prescription and negotiation, knowledge formation and sharing is visible as a tool or technique of governance that forms the basis of many (often subconscious) power struggles between CBT knowledge communities. For example, if we consider knowledge about homestays as a one-way transfer from development agencies or tour operators to host communities, we can see how knowledge is a technique of governance that has been naturalised such that it appears to be an essential component of CBT implementation. The 'conduct of conduct' in CBT is thus achieved through a technique of governance that occurs under the guise of 'knowledge sharing.'

As demonstrated throughout this thesis, tour operators are a complex actor in the CBT actor-network and would fall within Callon's definition of a hybrid intermediary. Callon describes an *intermediary* as 'anything passing between actors which defines the relationship between them' (Callon, 1991, p. 134) and is, in essence, anything that 'transports meaning or force without transformation: defining its inputs is enough to define its outputs' (Latour, 2005, p. 39). According to Callon there are four main types of intermediary, being texts, technical artefacts, human beings and money. Partnered with intermediaries are *mediators*, which are unpredictable relational links, where 'their input is never a good predictor of their output; their specificity has to be taken into account every time' (Latour, 2005, p. 39). The distinction between intermediaries and mediators is however often unclear, and indeed "in practice, the world is filled with *hybrid intermediaries*" (Callon, 1991, p. 138) such as tour operators in CBT in Viet Nam.

The hybrid intermediary roles of tour operators are clear in the following examples. In some cases they are eager to partner with development agencies to initiate new CBT

activities, as is the case with the Responsible Travel Club and Chieng Yen⁴⁸ commune. Yet some tour operators prefer the concept of privately-owned community lodges to the homestay concept. This preference is demonstrated in the following quotes:

"I would love to develop another model and I'm working with one of our suppliers in the north, where we're looking at actually creating a series of community lodges, where we don't actually hire one family or one house, but we can be involved in building a community lodge where we actually rent the land from the community...I think it would be a much better experience for the clients as well as being much more beneficial for the community...not only is there less potential for jealousy but also you know, we spread the wealth more into the village, so if we are actually buying food from them, and if we're hiring a cook that's in the village, and if we have a local guide that's from the village, then I think people begin to really see more of the benefit" (Simon, tour operator, pers. comm., 2010).

"The problem is that most of them [tour operators], especially the big ones, they want to build a community house in the village, and then it's their property, and this we don't want" (Mary, development agency employee, pers comm., 2010).

This example clearly shows two actors in an actor-network competing for knowledge production and acceptance by other actors⁴⁹. The actions of tour operators in trying to set up privately owned community lodges undermines the dominant discourse that argues CBT is best if development agency and/or donor driven. It raises the question of private sector potential for CBT development. As a result, the actor-network remains unstable, not only in terms of accepted knowledge but also in terms of accepted roles of each actor. Material

⁴⁸See case study five in chapter three.

⁴⁹ It is acknowledged that many self-titled 'CBT' initiatives developed by the private sector are unlikely to meet academic definitions of CBT particularly due to the absence of community ownership and control. However until greater criticism is applied to the ubiquitous usage of the term 'CBT' for any tourism occurring at the local level, it is relevant and appropriate to this research to consider the private sector as another developer of CBT.

implications include the risk of tour operators and development agencies becoming market competitors, continuation of the separation between the two actors when establishing CBT, and a limited capacity to draw government support for more pro-poor tourism policies.

Slippages in Murdoch's spaces:

Slippages between neoliberal and non-capitalist forms

Murdoch was at great pains to point out that spaces of prescription and negotiation are not just another simplistic dualism. Rather, spaces of prescription and negotiation cannot exist without the other, they are "two sides of the same coin" (1998, p. 364). Even in seemingly rigid spaces of prescription, there is still scope for negotiation, where spaces of prescription and negotiation may 'shade' into one another (Murdoch, 1998; Star, 1991). This is an important distinction that encourages us to focus on the interrelations and intertwining of network spaces, avoiding the risk of seeing particular spaces in polarised or binary ways (Hetherington, 1997 in Murdoch, 1998).

An organising theme throughout the composite and contradictory discourses and material realities of the CBT actor-network is that of economic profit (Blackstock, 2005; Cheong & Miller, 2000). This presents an excellent lens through which to examine not only the spaces of prescription and negotiation, but the slippage that occurs between these spaces, and the ways in which these spaces shade into one another. As introduced in chapter four, the political economy of CBT in Viet Nam is a complex site of interaction between neoliberal and non-capitalist forms of economics. I adopt Ilcan & Phillips' understanding of neoliberalism as:

"a governmental rationality that shapes conduct by re-positioning and deploying the values and norms of the market as the principal means by which people measure themselves and others. That is, neoliberalism entails a cultural reform, where economic liberalization, privatization, and market mechanisms become key instruments that privilege and oblige particular conceptions of knowledge, capacities and actions for social transformation" (2010, p. 847).

Tourism can be seen as a direct driver and beneficiary of neoliberalism, “as it tends to flourish in an open economic environment that facilitates the free movement of capital, labour and consumers” (Schilcher, 2007, p. 168). Tourism, including CBT, encourages interaction of host communities with a cash-based economy, global markets, where entrepreneurialism and individualism are rewarded financially, and success is measured in economic terms.

Neoliberal capitalism is evident in tourism in north-west Viet Nam, drawing “an increasing number of highland minority individuals into the capitalist economy in many new, varied and also contested ways” (Turner, 2007, p. 392). Over the past decade development agencies and NGOs have received increased funding from official donor agencies, which some researchers suggest has increased the influence of neoliberal economics on NGO identity and resulting activities (Biggs & Neame, 1996). Neoliberal influences on development intervention are apparent (as discussed in chapter four), including commodification of villages and landscapes, and attempts to hand over management of CBT to non-state entities, which requires strong and dynamic institutional arrangements (Duffy, 2008). The economic growth-poverty alleviation nexus is a contested issue but as Schilcher asserts, there is a general agreement that economic growth is required to reduce poverty head count (2007, p. 168). There is a sense of inevitability among tour operators and development agencies that a capitalist economy will eventuate; and a sense that Viet Nam is a transitional economy moving towards a neoliberal economic end point (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Lloyd, 2004).

Alongside the spaces of prescription where neoliberal capitalist principles are firmly embedded discursively and materially in the CBT actor-network; are spaces of negotiation where non-capitalist ideals are filtering through CBT-related activities. As mentioned in chapter four, development agencies are simultaneously introducing counter-hegemonic CBT projects that resist the neoliberal economic regime: through the advocacy of village funds, benefit sharing systems, homestay rotation systems, and general promotion of self reliance through community rather than individual action. Homestay tourism initiatives are an excellent example of development agencies encouraging the community to focus on mobilising existing assets rather than needs; with an assets-based approach producing “more enabling visions of community futures” (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p. 145). Tour

operators embracing sustainable and responsible tourism discourses and translating these into material actions are introducing ethics into the capitalist based system, which accordingly to Gibson-Graham (2006) is an important component for a non-capitalist economy. Yet even these seemingly non-capitalist activities, such as benefit sharing mechanisms, are highly politicised. Portrayed as being about equity, they are also a form of governmentality, a technique to 'conduct the conduct' of people.

This discussion shows that in initiating CBT, development agencies are advocating a move into neoliberal, cash based economies via tourism whilst at the same time establishing alternative, non-capitalist economic activities. The homestay concept specifically is simultaneously entering and diverging from neoliberal capitalist economics. At the individual level slippage between the neoliberal space of prescription, and the non-capitalist space of negotiation occurs with some local individuals embracing the new market opportunities that tourism provides, and others more cautiously seeking confidence in traditional agricultural practices (Tugault-Lafleur & Turner, 2009). In a similar vein, Gibson describes tourism as 'slippery capitalism' where

“space continually emerges for small operators, itinerant stallholders, artisans, sex workers, drug dealers and musicians to seek livelihoods (Shaw, 2004; Gibson, 2007; Turner, 2007) , a function of slippages across capitalist and non-capitalist, and formal and informal sectors” (2009, p. 528).

We have already seen examples where individuals in CBT in north-western Viet Nam are finding these spaces to create new livelihood opportunities for themselves. Negating commonly held assumptions (spaces of prescription) that entry into a market economy is an inevitability and a common goal for all, researchers have identified that involvement of H'mong people in livelihood diversification (such as tourism or the cardamom trade) is highly selective based on “ways that *they* themselves deem to be appropriate, not those necessarily based on so-called western-based market-oriented economic rationale” (Tugault-Lafleur & Turner, 2009, p. 399; Turner, 2007). This has obvious difficulties for CBT planning, as much of the social change occurs in the 'muddled' space somewhere between the neoliberal capitalist forms of tourism and traditional livelihoods.

There is slippage even at the philosophical level. The discursive mainstream understandings of sustainable tourism lead to criticism of resort enclaves, yet in some cases it is the existence of these resorts that enable small-scale CBT initiatives to develop, providing for tourists already in the area (Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). This suggests an interesting paradigmatic dilemma with significant implications for the commercial viability of CBT initiatives. That 'sustainable tourism' and CBT will never find fixed meanings is not necessarily a negative reality: rather the continual debate over meaning provides theoretical space for reimagining, and in reimagining, there is hope that innovative ideas and solutions will emerge.

Chapter summary

Given the lack of existing studies using empirical ANT approaches for studies of tourism, this research has remained deliberately (and at times frustratingly) superficial. In order to demonstrate the potential of ANT for obtaining a critical understanding of the complexity of CBT practices, I decided that each chapter would best prove this point through multiple examples, at the cost of more in depth analysis. This recent chapter is no different, and potentially raises more questions than it answers. However the important issue is that the questions are asked, and hopefully researched in greater detail in future studies.

Chapter five has shown how Murdoch's concept of spaces of prescription and negotiation (1998) can be used to show those areas of the CBT actor-network that are more, or less stable (and durable). Studying spaces of prescription is very similar to the concept of a black box, well known in ANT. Through examples this chapter has shown how spaces of prescription can limit the development of new ideas and potential partnerships, as well as divert criticism from underperforming parts of an actor-network. Demonstrating spaces of negotiation within the actor-network highlights the agency that emerges from the shifting power relations within the actor-network. Whether negotiated discourses or roles of a particular actor, understanding spaces of negotiation reveals the causes of instability or poor durability of actor-networks, as well as the heterogeneity.

Using Murdoch's 'spaces' framework also highlights the spatial relations in CBT actor-networks. Although CBT is discursively framed as a local activity occurring within the

bounds of a village, in exploring the spaces of prescription and negotiation we can see more clearly the complex spatiality in CBT. Relationships and performances occur across space to connect together actors, discourses, technologies, ideologies and institutions in a complex assemblage we recognise as community-based tourism.

Investigating spaces of prescription and negotiation within an actor-network simultaneously demonstrates how CBT operates as a form of governance. Using Foucault's guidance, we can look for techniques of power that mould the conduct of conduct (Allen, 2003). Such techniques include discourse, and we saw how dominant discourses of 'sustainable tourism' not only legitimise the actions of tour operators and development agencies, but how the term has been naturalised in such a way that the inherent politics and contradictions are hidden. Other techniques discussed in this chapter include spatial framings of CBT as local and bounded which has associated limitations, use of participatory processes to spread western democratic ideals, and introduction of 'ethical' practices into the neoliberal capitalist economy.

This chapter has covered many aspects of CBT that both directly and indirectly impact on the viability of CBT. As outlined in chapter one, an objective of this thesis was to learn how specific relations and transformations within the CBT actor-network could be enabling and constraining for the viability of CBT initiatives – one of the most commonly stated challenges for CBT. It is to this issue that I now turn to in the final chapter.

Chapter 6

Transforming the actors, transforming the possibilities

"You buy from me and I go home" (elderly H'mong lady)

"Someone else said that last night" (American tourist)

"If I sell something I can go home" (elderly H'mong lady)

"My bag is full sorry" (American tourist)

Exchange between an American tourist dining outside relatively expensive Italian restaurant, and elderly H'mong street handicraft seller. The sad thing is, it's true. If the H'mong woman sells something, she can justify going home. She doesn't want to go home empty handed, as this would mean she would have spent all this time in the town instead of working on the fields, all for nothing.

The tourist, who means well, is making it worse though because she has struck up a conversation for a while now, so the hopes of the old lady are raised. It's getting dark, she really wants to close this sale, and now it's turned nasty; the tourist has become annoyed and just turned away to face the wall. The old lady has walked off, head down.

The tourist can't believe how persistent the H'mong lady is. The elderly H'mong lady can't understand why the tourist can't just give up a small amount of cash, a tiny fraction of what she is spending on dinner, to buy something.

This must play out dozens of times every day, every day of the year.

Is it sad? Or is it just a natural evolution of human interaction and relationships in Sa Pa, which have developed and changed over time for centuries? I think perhaps both.

I'm hiding inside another restaurant across the road, with a piano love song soundtrack playing. I know the Christmas carols by piano soundtrack is on next, it seems inappropriately jolly and especially surreal given the desperate scenes playing out in the dying light across the road.

Notes from field diary, Viet Nam, April 2010.

On the expectation to recommend

I had always assumed that my concluding chapter would contain recommendations of some sort. However, as my understandings of tourism *for* development in Viet Nam deepened, so too did my uncertainties and the ability to make recommendations seemed ever further away. I was relieved to find I was not alone, as I read Li's predicament:

"I find an ethnographic appreciation of the complexities of rural relations to be antithetical to the position of expert. This might seem counterintuitive. Surely a person like me, after more than a decade of research, has ideas about how to translate that knowledge into effective programs to help people? Indeed, I am sometimes asked by anthropologically trained development administrators in Indonesia to provide suggestions about what they should do. More specifically, they ask me to provide them with a bridge between my research describing the dynamics of rural life, which some of them have read, and the world of projects, which they inhabit. Such a bridge eludes me. Why is it, I ask myself, that so many experts can examine Indonesia and devise programs to improve it, whereas I cannot? This is not a matter of coyness or modesty on my part. Still less am I indifferent to the problems of poverty, disease and ecological disaster that experts seek to resolve. I believe my predicament is diagnostic. It enables me to ask what ways of thinking, what practices and assumptions are required to translate messy conjunctures, with all the processes that run through them, into linear narratives of problems, interventions, and beneficial results" (Li, 2007, pp. 3-4).

When people ask me what the conclusions and recommendations of my research are, I don't have a tidy, succinct answer. In exploring the messy heterogenous assemblage that makes up the multiple and overlapping CBT actor-networks in Viet Nam, I am left with more questions than answers, and more uncertainties than convictions. I think immediately of the dynamics of CBT, the unstable positioning of actors and unpredictable performances that makes durability of the actor-network so difficult. Despite various spaces of prescription

that limit conceptualisations of new and different ways of understanding and participating in CBT, multiple spaces of negotiation still exist and emerge providing new opportunities and new imaginings. This way of looking at CBT is completely incompatible with the language of development, the language of 'problems,' 'projects,' 'results' and 'recommendations;' and is also not conducive to a tidy concluding chapter of a Master's thesis or a succinct set of recommendations. As Ruming identified, ANT research

"presents a snapshot of network connectivity, which is part of a continually evolving process: there is no final coherence, no system of coherent networks; rather, there are complexities whose relations are uncertain – although we as researchers are required at some point to 'present findings'. Here our translations become powerful as we (unintentionally) present a finite and bounded reality which is false" (2009, p. 458).

Through the use of a rarely applied methodology in tourism studies, this thesis has sought to make the functioning of CBT actor-networks more visible rather than attempting to explain them, reiterating the significance of context and diversity rather than seeking to create a set of guidelines or recommendations for all. As Farrington and Bebbington (1993, p. 178) helpfully point out, there is value in this approach:

"To continue stressing context dependence and diversity may not appear very constructive to those who want 'relevant' research, yet we would counter that this is not so. 'Relevance' is not only a characteristic of research that says how to act; research is equally relevant when it points to the questions that must be asked before acting in order to increase the likelihood that the final outcome of the action will be coherent with the initial intentions."

So how does this research point to the questions that must be asked before acting? It is helpful first to recap the progression of this thesis to this point, before considering these questions.

Tracing the associations

Despite much progression of scholarship in development studies and tourism since the 1950s, little attention has been paid to the role that development agencies play in the development of pro-poor tourism (Hawkins & Mann 2007; Lindberg et al 2001). This formed the founding motivation for this research, which is set in north-western Viet Nam. As discussed in chapter one, academic research on tourism in Viet Nam has been hampered by a number of politically-driven restrictions and the relatively recent expansion of international tourism. The country provides a fascinating context for situating a study of the linkages between development and tourism, and between theory and practice.

Actor-network theory is the key research methodology for this work, supplemented and enhanced by insights from postcolonial and postdevelopment scholarship, and Foucault's theorisation of power/knowledge and governmentality. The aim was to use ANT to capture and re-describe with greater nuance the performances that (inter)connect to create community-based tourism. Research material included interview transcripts from fieldwork in Viet Nam, notes from participant observation, tourism promotional material, project documents and academic literature. I concur with Davies that "starting an investigation informed by actor network theory, which eschews *a priori* categories, can seem particularly overwhelming" (2003, p. 204) and I was initially paralysed with my data; bewildered by the multiple points of departure I could make. I was also concerned that the ANT approach would result in an all-too-descriptive piece of critical geography. However as Massey outlines, 're-description' is invaluable,

"in order to disrupt the hegemonic imagination, open up new ways of thinking, remove the blockages to potential new forms of practice" (2003, p. 78).

This then, became the objective. In summarising my process of 're-description' here, it is hoped that the use of applied ANT may seem less bewildering and simultaneously appealing in its potential to 'disrupt the hegemonic imagination.'

Applying Callon's (1986b) phases of translation to case study material provided the major starting point. This involves identification and description of the actors involved in the CBT actor-networks, followed by exploration of the (power) relations and performances that connect the actors in particular ways to achieve CBT. Using case studies from several CBT initiatives, chapter three demonstrated that CBT actor-networks in north-western Viet Nam are typically unstable and are constantly undergoing reconfiguration as different actors negotiate their roles, and new actors enter or leave the actor-network. The fluidity of performances in actor-networks proved particularly challenging to capture eloquently, as others have found (Davies, 2003).

One is left to question the causes of such instability in CBT actor-networks, and I chose to investigate the ways in which broader understandings contribute to and emerge from the translation process, particularly through discourse. Chapter four explores the dominant discourses and emerging counter-hegemonic discourses that mediate CBT actor-networks, making particular relationships more or less durable. Influential discourses in CBT include variable understandings of sustainable and responsible tourism, diverging definitions of CBT, discourses of authenticity, and homogenous understandings of the key actors – particularly host communities who are discursively constructed as poor and lacking knowledge.

The relationship between power and knowledge underpins all discourses, which leads into chapter five – addressing the exclusions, ambiguities, prescribed and negotiated spaces in the CBT actor-network (Murdoch, 1998) where power relations are reinforced or renegotiated. These spaces are where the potential lies for new imaginings, new partnerships, and new practices. In exploring the prescribed and negotiated spaces, chapter five demonstrated the connection between discourse and material realities in the context of CBT and brings us to this point - to consider the methodological and theoretical contributions of this research, and implications for the practice of tourism *for* development.

Methodological and theoretical contributions

This thesis is somewhat eclectic in its theoretical and methodological orientation. The methodological use of actor-network theory was chosen as after some initial reading

around CBT indicated that the planning, implementation and success of CBT was influenced by highly complex interactions and relationships. An ANT approach “provides a sensibility to the messy practices” (Law, 2009, p. 142) rather than trying to (over)simplify it. Underpinned in general by poststructuralist theory, this research also borrows from postcolonial and postdevelopment writings, and applies a Foucauldian framework for analysing power/knowledge and governmentality.

As detailed in chapter two, although ANT has been applied fairly widely in the academic fields of sociology and geography, it is only in its infancy in tourism studies. This research adds a further example to the handful of existing studies that use ANT, and in particular adds an empirical study to what is a very theoretical field both in tourism and across the disciplines. More importantly, this research shows just how useful ANT approaches can be for tourism studies. Moving far away from traditional tourism research characterised by overly descriptive scholarship, use of models and dualistic categorisations, an ANT approach embraces the complexity of relationships that occur to create tourism activities. This research has shown how an ANT approach can make relations of power more explicit, countering critics who suggest ANT is apolitical (Johannesson, 2005). Using inspiration from governmentality literature it also becomes more apparent how CBT operates as a form of governance and enables networks to cohere across diverse scales of time and space.

Postcolonial and postdevelopment perspectives influence this work. The strength of postcolonial approaches is the persistent attention to the viewpoint of the ‘other’ (Wearing & McDonald, 2002), which is often explored through discourse analysis. Marginalised individuals and communities can make important contributions to ideas and strategies for alternative and imaginative ways of doing tourism. Studying closely the motivations of host communities also reveals the biases of other actors, such as the assumption that complete immersion in neoliberal capitalist economies is desired by all in Sa Pa (Turner, 2007). However a common criticism of postcolonialism is that in prioritising the viewpoint of marginalised people, a new way of ‘othering’ is achieved. ANT’s focus on the heterogeneity of actor-networks, and clear methodological directives not to prioritise any actor over another, helps avoid this weakness of postcolonialism. The use of Foucauldian-influenced discourse analysis could understandably indicate postdevelopment leanings, yet this thesis does not reject development, invite political quietism, or ignore the search for alternatives;

these all being common criticisms of postdevelopment (Pieterse, 2009). Rather, the use of an ANT approach with a specific focus on relations of power and spaces of negotiation has made questions around politics and power more explicit, and the opportunities for spaces where alternative forms of development are emerging are more apparent.

This thesis has also sought to move past another common criticism of much postcolonial and postdevelopment scholarship – that the focus on discourse comes at the expense of attention to material realities. As Ferguson requested researchers to do back in 1994, this thesis has also focused more on the effects that particular ideas and discourses bring about, rather than getting tied up in examining how closely ideas and discourses represent the truth (1994, p. xv). Chapters three, four and five demonstrate empirically the linkages between dominant discourses and material realities in CBT. In addition, no assumptions are made that a change in discourse will immediately bring a change in reality, as coined the ‘scholastic fallacy’ by Bordieu (1990, in Azcarate, 2006, p. 100). Quite the contrary, rather than guessing at expected counter-discourses and counter-practices, this research has demonstrated through examples some of the emerging counter-discourses and practices within CBT actor-networks, highlighting the agency within the actor-networks.

The theory and politics of poststructuralism combine well with the de-centred approach of actor-network theory, to gain new understandings of power. The new insights into the reshuffling and negotiation of roles in the CBT actor-network shown via examples in this thesis, demonstrate that an ANT approach has decolonising dimensions. An ANT approach to tourism highlights how power is in the relations rather than being an inherent component of individual actors. This encourages the deconstruction of traditional power binaries in tourism such as the dominant tourist/marginalised host community (Cheong & Miller, 2000; Johannesson, 2005). As this thesis has shown, this approach also disrupts the perceived neutrality and inferred control embedded discursively in the notion of development or aid agencies, just as it deconstructs the power commonly understood to be an intrinsic quality of tourists and tour operators. The decentring approach of ANT, combined with poststructuralist influences allows us to see that like power, agency is also in the relations, rather than in individual actors. We have thus seen that agency only emerges from the relations between actors and is not inherent in the development agencies, tour operators, government authorities, host communities or tourists themselves. This is linked

to another important distinction enabled by an ANT approach; that endogenous and exogenous development options are not mutually exclusive (Murdoch, 2000). From these understandings the ways in which host communities can access counter-hegemonic discourses or ideologies becomes more visible to us, and we can more clearly see the new opportunities that arise (Wearing & McDonald, 2002) or in actor-network speak, new modes of ordering that occur.

In summary then, as well as making independent empirical and theoretical contributions to the ANT literature, the emerging use of ANT in tourism studies and literature on tourism in Viet Nam, this thesis also draws together several areas of scholarship not commonly used together and demonstrates how ANT can help to avoid some of the common criticisms of poststructuralist approaches. The theoretical and methodological orientations of this research are all in aid of some empirical objectives, and it is the implications of this research for understandings of CBT in Viet Nam that I now turn.

Bridging the gap: between theory and practice

Things are often black-boxed when they are difficult to decipher (Latour, 1987), and community-based tourism in Viet Nam is certainly a black box. As we have seen, CBT has been discursively constructed as a normative good; with the heterogenous identities, roles and power relations between the various actors poorly understood or acknowledged. Using interview material and project documents from development agency-assisted CBT initiatives in northern Viet Nam, this research has sought to open this black box. Tracing the processes of translation in CBT actor-networks has made more explicit the complex set of interlocking performances that are required to achieve mobilisation of the actor-network. In particular, this thesis has highlighted the continual negotiation of roles that creates much of CBT's instability and unpredictability, contributing to poor levels of success. This draws attention to the politicised nature of all relations in Vietnamese CBT. In emphasising both the areas where CBT operates in a prescribed and unchallenged manner and the areas where actors are contesting and negotiating their roles in the performance of CBT, it is hoped that CBT practitioners might gain a more holistic awareness of their role in the actor-network, alongside a greater capacity to imagine new opportunities and ways of doing CBT. As academic literature addressing tourism in Viet Nam is scarce, and that addressing CBT is

generally limited to reports from development practitioners, this thesis makes a major contribution to an emerging dialogue addressing Vietnamese CBT more critically, and opens up a vast range of future research possibilities.

To balance the theoretical and methodological discussion, these final reflections attempt to show how an ANT inspired research project contributes to new understandings that enable some bridging between the theory and practice of tourism *for* development. This objective has underpinned much of the discussion throughout this thesis, applying key literature in development studies where relevant to aid the CBT analyses. The following section shows through several brief examples how this research can inform practice and consequently impact on the material realities of development-assisted CBT practices.

Woven throughout this thesis are references to commercial viability, which stem from Goodwin and Santilli's recent research that identified that the large majority of CBT activities "enjoy very little success" (2009, p. 4) and are developed in a supply-oriented way with few considered to be economically sustainable. Many other researchers have lamented the same (Ashley & Goodwin, 2007; Butler & Hinch, 2007; van der Duim & Caalders, 2008). This applies to the Vietnamese context also:

"With community tourism, I see many places around Viet Nam that I think are not so successful. Not so many visitors to the village, and after they [development agencies] have finished, the project almost disappears. Even when they invest half million or a million⁵⁰, after the project is finished, there is nothing. I don't want to tell you any more because many NGOs will be angry with me." (Vietnamese tourism consultant, pers. comm., 2010).

This begs two questions: 'what is success?' and 'what factors influence the likelihood of achieving success?' This research has deliberately shied away from delving into the complex questions of 'what is a successful CBT project' and 'how can success be measured?' as these

⁵⁰ US dollars.

are large research projects in themselves⁵¹. Notwithstanding that ‘success’ can (and should) be measured in multiple interconnected ways, that may or may not be economic, it is assumed here (based on interview material and project documents) that success and durability for all CBT initiatives in north-western Viet Nam relies on an element of economic sustainability and independence, which in turn is hoped to stimulate other success factors such as community empowerment. This research has highlighted a number of factors that influence the durability of CBT actor-networks, and consequently the commercial viability and sustainability.

In following the actors involved in establishing and operating CBT initiatives through case studies in Viet Nam, this thesis has illustrated how the complexity and dynamism of relationships is particularly context specific and poses extremely difficult challenges for sustainability. There is an awkward juxtaposition of the acknowledged complexity of development initiatives (including CBT) with the language of development which entails “simple prescriptions of a ‘do this and that will follow’ kind” (Curtis & Poon, 2009, p. 840). By envisaging CBT as a series of interconnected yet unpredictable performances, it is easy to see that the means of achieving pro-poor CBT goals is uncertain at best. Yet donors and development agents persist in adopting practices that assume the opposite, which is characteristic of the development ‘industry’ in general. The persistent dichotomy that development is either endogenous or exogenous, as mentioned earlier, is crucially misleading here. Curtis and Poon describe this approach as ‘managerialist,’ exemplified by a focus on linear patterns of causation, known points of intervention, means of delivery that can be subject to linear programming, and measurable outcomes from equally measurable inputs (2009, pp. 837-840). In CBT this managerialist approach is evident: chapter four demonstrated the homogenising assumptions about host communities that are used to ‘problematise’ development, we have seen how developing homestay facilities is a fixed point of intervention (and exit point, for that matter) with specific patterns of delivery involving workshops and training sessions that are planned in lineal fashion. Homestay

⁵¹ Goodwin and Santilli (2009) tried to answer these questions, asking 116 development practitioners what they deemed indicators of success in a CBT context to mean. Only 40% of respondents identified commercial viability as an important factor in assessing ‘success,’ and only 12% cited collective benefits as a measure of success. The vast majority of respondents (70%) set their criteria for ‘success’ at advances in social capital and empowerment.

guest numbers and the resulting incomes can also be measured fairly easily, although this definition of success or prioritisation of 'outcomes' is contentious. This preoccupation with homestays is an obligatory point of passage (Callon, 1986b) in the CBT actor-network, where shared understandings have been reached, rightly or wrongly, that homestay tourism and the accompanying training sessions are the most suitable method of development-assisted CBT.

Given the instability of homestay-style CBT, it seems some reassessment is required of the intense focus on homestay development at the expense of supplementary activities. Academic literature such as Goodwin and Santilli (2009) proves that equal or greater financial gains are made from tourist activities as from accommodation services, as reiterated by a tourism consultant in Viet Nam (Andrew, pers. comm., 2010). Yet homestays remain almost the sole focus of much CBT in Viet Nam, perhaps because they easily fit the managerialist approach described above. Whilst acknowledging that tourists need somewhere to stay, the assumptions made by many development agencies that host communities will develop the supplementary activities themselves prove unfounded in most cases thus far. Other options such as community lodges may be more successful in some villages, just as indirect tourism services such as growing food for sale to tourism providers in nearby villages may be more suitable for some villages and individuals. In preparing for the complexity of CBT actor-networks, it would seem that preparing several options for CBT involvement is a more appropriate development approach than the current prescribed means.

Unsatisfactory patronage of many CBT sites is due to their supply-oriented development, according to several authors on CBT (Butler & Hinch, 2007; Goodwin & Santilli, 2009; van der Duim, 2007). In Viet Nam several tour operators attributed blame to development agencies who assume tourism expertise, without necessarily having vast tourism experience. The ANT approach requires that the researcher not assign priority or significance to any actor in an actor-network, and in abiding by this, the rapidly changing role of tour operators in the Vietnamese CBT context became apparent. I was able to see new spaces of opportunity that are opening up as a result of unconventional partnerships

between development agencies and tour operators, as seen in the example of the Responsible Travel Club and Chieng Yen⁵².

The effectiveness of partnerships and the call for development agencies to network with other public and private actors is not new. Over a decade ago Biggs and Neame (1996, p. 43) noted the irony of NGO advocates emphasising their independence to support their involvement in development, despite proven observations that partnerships are vital:

“One of the most significant observations concerning NGO effectiveness is that networking and coalitions with other NGOs and with other public and private actors are often the key to results (Harding 1994; Long & Van der Ploeg 1989). If one views development as the articulation of a series of local struggles and processes, it is obviously vital to understand the means by which networking succeeds....despite these lessons, the ‘independence’ of individual NGOs is still frequently used to advocate a growing role for NGOs in development.”

It would seem that CBT initiatives would benefit from stronger partnerships between development agencies and the private sector (particularly but not exclusively tour operators). As outlined in chapter three, these actors agree on this point but are yet to develop the trust and degree of mutual dependence required to work effectively together. As indicated in chapters three and four, CBT actor-networks in north-west Viet Nam struggle to achieve mobilisation, and struggle for durability due to various actors contesting their roles. I will thus watch with interest and hope the progress of the Responsible Travel Club in Hanoi, and the interactions of these tour operators with development agencies based in the north-west of Viet Nam. The revival of the Hanoi-based CBT Network is also encouraging, as in establishing new partnerships (or reconfiguring actor-networks) space for new understandings and ways of ‘doing’ CBT may emerge. Although it is tempting to be cynical, it is heartening to see new possibilities emerging for partnerships that may make CBT actor-networks more durable.

⁵² See case study five in chapter three.

The preoccupation with homestays as the format for CBT initiatives is reinforced through the production of best practice reports and CBT toolkits. A feature of neoliberalism is the myriad of ways institutions attempt to govern 'from a distance' through the use of techniques and calculative practices such as benchmarking and best practice (Larner & Le Heron, 2004; Le Heron, 2009). These techniques are more commonly recognised in discussions around the governance of economic spaces, but are equally applicable to tourism where guidelines for best practice and 'toolkits' are continually (re)produced in attempts to govern 'from a distance' the conduct of other tourism initiatives and subjects. These toolkits govern in a number of subtle ways, including through reinforcement of dominant discourses serving particular knowledge communities and ideological standpoints. These toolkits continue the historical tendency in tourism studies to produce models, which actively attempt to create spaces of prescription where actions, roles, inputs and outcomes are rigidly defined. Creation and use of toolkits to define development assistance is also characteristic of the managerialist approaches described above. Although produced with good intentions, they also arguably legitimise the activities of development agencies, with the toolkits and best practice guides they produce framed as tangible 'information' from which other communities will benefit. The production of toolkits and best practice guides ignores the heterogeneity of CBT and the agency within every CBT actor-network. The actor-network approach of this thesis illuminates the heterogeneity of tourism places, spaces and actors; and the unstable and fluid manner through which actors (re)negotiate their roles. Applying this approach to CBT indicates that toolkits and best practice guides are unlikely to be effective, and may only serve to limit the conceptualisation and imagining of appropriate tourism initiatives.

In all aspects of CBT planning tourism needs to be understood as a politicised activity, requiring nuanced understandings of complex social relations. Commercial viability and economic sustainability cannot be seen as discrete from the politics, hegemonic discourses and social relationships that underpin CBT. The ANT approach of this research confirms this interconnectedness, and thus supports Jamieson et al's (1998, p.2) assertion that 'a crucial step is to challenge the conventional wisdom that shapes development models and replace it with new approaches based on observation and analysis' (in Tugault-Lafleur & Turner, 2009).

How detailed observation and analysis might have changed tourism outcomes in north-western Viet Nam (and other places for that matter) can be seen through several examples. In Ta Phin we saw the new but unused market place, built with the good intentions of locating handicraft saleswomen in one place to encourage tourists previously deterred by the aggressive nature of the saleswomen. However too much focus on regaining the tourist dollar failed to have regard to local knowledge and local needs of craftswomen – resulting in a market that does not match their desires or expectations and consequently stands empty. Similarly in Sa Pa town tourist displeasure at aggressive street vendors has led to numerous attempts to situate handicraft sellers in fixed market locations (Michaud & Turner, 2000). These attempts have been unsuccessful however, and Hanh’s research (2008) proves that there are social and cultural reasons why street vendors persist with mobile sales. A Sa Pa tour operator sees this as crucial to effective assistance from development agencies:

“So, the important thing is how to help local people to understand what they should do, and what they shouldn’t do. So those organisations need first to understand why they do that, what the street vendors are thinking, and how they are living. Only when they carry out such study, and whenever they gain such knowledge, they should work out the right way, the right measures for managing such matters. A lot of meetings, a lot of money spent on that, but I ask, have you ever talked with a street vendor? Have you ever walked out in the evening together as a friend with street vendors? When you talk to them, when you are a friend to them, you understand them” (Sinh, pers. comm., 2010).

Research by Turner (2007) and Tugault-Lafleur and Turner (2009) in the Sa Pa area also explicitly recognises the importance of non-monetary aspects that influence the extent of local engagement with capitalist economic practices such as tourism, the cardamom trade and textile markets. Thus Turner considers that “development efforts that demand certain time commitments or specific volumes of deliverable outputs are therefore likely to fail” (2007, p. 400).

The poor capacity of development agencies for conducting research is not a new observation (Farrington & Bebbington, 1993). However, in tracing the translation of CBT actor-networks and seeing the complexity and unpredictability of relationships, this thesis reiterates that obtaining a more nuanced understanding of the social, cultural and political contexts within which development agencies operate is an increasingly essential requirement for sustainable CBT outcomes.

As shown throughout this thesis, durability of CBT actor-networks appears to weaken when parts of the actor-network configuration are (re)negotiated, such as poorly functioning benefit sharing mechanisms or when tour operators pursue privately owned community lodges instead of supporting true CBT initiatives. Negotiation is not inherently a bad thing; and often provides opportunities for new subjectivities to emerge and new or reconfigured actor-networks to be created. Indeed, negotiated spaces may represent empowerment of particular individuals or groups, often a goal of development assistance. Thus building on the argument above, in seeking to understand more deeply the social, cultural and political factors that motivate the various actors, negotiation may be appreciated as positive sign of empowerment rather than a threat to CBT. As seen through numerous examples in this research, negotiated spaces involve actors (human and non-human) undergoing some form of transformation. The final section of this chapter highlights the potential in these transformations, leaving a number of stories from the case studies as reminders of the agency that emerges, sometimes in the least expected places. Negotiated spaces also provide much scope for future research, and these ideas are intertwined in the narrative.

Transforming the actors, transforming CBT

As Davies told us earlier, “it is not enough just to follow the actors in building a network,” we must also pay close attention to “the transformations that the actors convened in the stories are undergoing. Networks are always in action” (Davies, 2003, p. 209). This thesis has followed the actors in building CBT actor-networks, and has explored some of the transformations that particular actors are undergoing. It is important to stress Davies’ point that actor-networks are always in action, always shifting, always transforming. This thesis has presented just a few such transformations, and I must emphasise that although

described here as though fixed in the time of my field research, these transformations of actors are and will be continuing. These transformations occurring in CBT actor-networks reflect the principle of symmetry in ANT, including both human and non-human actors. I have deliberately left to the end this summary of some specific transformations occurring in CBT in north-western Viet Nam. Transformations occur within and create spaces of negotiation. Spaces of negotiation provide new opportunities for new subjectivities, new imaginaries, and new futures. I therefore leave the reader with these impressions of transformations that represent possibility and potential, both of which is needed for poverty alleviation.

Examples of non-human transformations include the transformation of a house into a homestay, thus becoming a commodified object of tourist gaze and experience. The rice paddies, existing for many generations, become not only a source of food but an iconic part of the tourist experience and a symbol of authenticity. Even the toilet is transformed through development-assisted CBT actor-networks, with visible changes in construction materials and design representing much more in terms of perceived modernity, for better and worse. Technologies also have the potential to transform the CBT actor-network, and this research includes examples of cell phones and hydro-power dams as technologies that have significantly impacted on the CBT actor-networks of which they are a part. Enormous possibilities for future research lie in the potential of new communication technologies to transform CBT actor-networks.

Transformations occurring for key human actors are ongoing and are mediated by dominant discourses and power relations. For tour operators we have seen transformation as they amend their behaviour and practices in response to dominant discourses of sustainability and responsible tourism. At government level there is increasing support for tourism as both a market based activity and having pro-poor potential, which illuminates tensions between the state's embrace of a market based economy and desire to maintain centralised political control. Further research possibilities abound in exploring this tension in much more depth; made all the richer if appropriate access to key government officials was obtained. Global discourses and agreements such as the Millennium Development Goals have influenced governmental transformations; evident in recent legislative and regulatory measures that enable and support tourism activities with pro-poor intentions.

Host communities are of course the object of transformation, as well as active agents. Examples of transformation occurring within the CBT actor-network include diversification of agricultural livelihoods to include tourism, increased knowledge of tourism practices, emergence of entrepreneurial behaviour by some individuals, changes to social relations through such factors as jealousy and individualism, and of course engagement with different forms of knowledge through interaction with other actors. The other key actor studied in this research is of course development agencies, who are undergoing transformation throughout the actor-network as well as being a key driving force behind new associations of humans and non-humans, the creation of new actor-networks and the transformation of existing ones. Significant transformations that are just beginning to emerge within development agencies include increasing recognition of the value of effective partnerships with tour operators, and changes in intervention styles as funding sources change and inevitably lessen due to Viet Nam's ascension from the United Nation's list of least developed countries (Sharpley, 2009). This last point means the questions raised in this thesis around the long term sustainability of CBT may bear much greater scrutiny in the near future.

The transformations described above are a few mere examples of transformations occurring for human and non-human actors in the CBT actor-networks in Viet Nam. Being aware of these transformations and causal factors is integral to developing styles of development assistance that are more suitable for the continual reordering of CBT actor-networks. This then leaves the door wide open for further research and analysis, particularly of the many factors that mediate the transformation of actors, such as shifting discourses, political-economic ideologies, and power relations. As summarised by Johannesson (2005, p. 141), the very crux of ANT is to provide a

“methodological framework for approaching heterogenous assembled realities and a key element is an empirical exploration...it is not meant to provide a final level explanation but rather a ‘means to go on’” (Thrift, 1999 in Johannesson, 2005, emphasis added).

In this vein, this thesis has contributed to an emerging dialogue about CBT and development assistance, and about the use of ANT for tourism research. In shedding light on the performative elements that allow CBT actor-networks to become more or less durable, many further research possibilities for Vietnamese tourism and development-assisted tourism are also highlighted. Thus this thesis has provided a 'means to go on' should anyone accept the challenge.

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