

NEOLIBERALISM AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VOLUNTEERING IN A
POST-SOCIALIST CONTEXT: THE CONTRADICTION OF UTOPIA OF PEACE
CORPS/BULGARIA (1991 – 2013)

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted to
Michigan State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Sociology - Doctor of Philosophy

2016

ABSTRACT

NEOLIBERALISM AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VOLUNTEERING IN A POST-SOCIALIST CONTEXT: THE CONTRADICTION UTOPIA OF PEACE CORPS/BULGARIA (1991 – 2013)

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This dissertation examines the interaction between neoliberal and alternative approaches to development in a post-socialist context using the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program as a case study. I use the notion of transition to complex interdependence as a framework to theorize and conceptualize the role of Peace Corps in the post-socialist development of Bulgaria and Bulgaria's insertion into processes of neoliberal globalization. I build a conceptual framework for the study of international development volunteering that separates mechanisms that promote neoliberal social transformation from alternative or counter-neoliberal mechanisms for social transformation. The research design utilizes a mixed-methods and multiple sources data collection strategy encompassing document analysis, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation informed by the actor-oriented approach to development studies. This approach allows me to examine how differently positioned actors in the Peace Corps/Bulgaria partnership structure - staff, volunteers, and their local partners – created and contested notions of “development” and the kind of social transformation that was enabled by Peace Corps during its operation in Bulgaria. I argue that Peace Corps/Bulgaria represents a case of a contradictory “real utopia”: a development model that simultaneously promotes, conforms to, and resists processes of neoliberalization; a model that has the potential to facilitate a transformation of the current global order towards a more equitable world based on the values of social and environmental justice rather than market rationality.

To Stoyo, my Father
Loosing you to postsocialism compelled me to go back to graduate school
And to workers for peace and friendship everywhere

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is humbling to think about all the people and organizations that supported me through graduate school and the dissertation process. I first, thank the people who agreed to answer my survey, interview, and focus group questions and those who provided me with documents and information about the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program. Without your willingness to share your thoughts and personal archives with me this research would not have been possible. In fact, in moments when I was thinking about quitting, knowing that many of you were looking forward to reading this dissertation was the most completing reason to carry on and finish it.

This was a rewarding, albeit a difficult process as it enveloped during two life transitions: moving from Lansing, MI to Blacksburg, VA in the middle of my graduate studies and welcoming two beautiful children – Kosara and Devin - to this world. I could not have done it without the love and support of my partner, Tyler, our parents, and other family members. Tyler did not only allow me to balance work and family he made sure that we balanced work and family time. He listened to me talking through my ideas and concerns, made sure that my computer did not crash, and even drove me to my research sites. He also insisted that I take regular breaks and that we go out for walks with the children and drinks with our friends every so often. I am also grateful for the continuous support of our parents – my mother Todora and my in-laws Robert and Marilou Fox – for their belief in me and especially for helping with the care of their grandchildren. I also want to thank cousins Susan and Peter Omberg who hosted me during my field work in Washington, D.C. and my sisters – Krasimira and Petya – who took care of Kosara during my field work in Bulgaria.

I was also fortunate to have a dissertation committee that was committed to seeing me through this process. My chair, Brendan Mullan, epitomized the notion of the advocate adviser.

He supported my decision to change the topic of my dissertation research early on and helped me put together a committee that was willing to work with me while I lived off-campus. He was always there for me, reading and commenting on drafts, writing letters of recommendations to funding sources, providing advice on teaching and job applications, helping me expand my professional networks, celebrating my successes, and most importantly believing in me when I felt discouraged. I learned tremendously from Lawrence Busch, who planted the seeds for this dissertation during a course on “Neoliberalism: The Making of Contemporary Society.” As a former Peace Corps Volunteer himself, he was also uniquely positioned to advise me on the research design and interpretation of the research findings. Xufei Ren encouraged me to articulate more clearly the major contributions of this dissertation. Norm Graham always had a suggestion on new literature on the post-socialist transitions that made my work stronger. Steve Gold served on my comprehensive exam committee and remained supportive of my research and a great help with my teaching and job searches. I also want to thank Stan and Toba Kaplowitz who listened to my dissertation proposal and dissertation defense mock-up presentations and provided much needed feedback on how to improve the clarity and brevity of my talks.

I relied on Tammy Spangler, the Sociology department’s graduate secretary, and Roseann Bills who succeeded her, to navigate the dissertation process. I am grateful for their prompt replies to all of my questions. The other staff members – Shannon, Debbie, John Duda, and John Schwartz – were also always most helpful.

During my years in graduate school, I met many wonderful people that enriched my life. Among the many colleagues at the Sociology department, I feel that I should mention at least two that I relied on the most: Cristián Doña Reveco and Erica Giorda, both international students with children who had started the program ahead of me. As the more advanced in the program

student of Brendan Mullan, Cristián, served as my mentor and offered valuable advice on coursework, teaching, and research. Erica offered much needed encouragement during our weekly check-ins when I was writing this document. When we moved to Blacksburg, VA, I was fortunate to meet another off-campus graduate student parent, Vitoria Blanchard, who was at the same stage of the dissertation process. Our monthly meetings kept me on track with the completion of my tasks.

Outside of academia, I want to thank my Earth Spirits Sisters and my UU Parents' Group for helping me deal with the stress that comes with dissertating. Last, but not least, I owe much gratitude to my dear friend, Tatum Branaman, for proofreading this document.

In addition to individuals, I benefited from the support of several organizations. The Peace Corps/Bulgaria office provided me with copies of all legacy materials and helped me write my FOIA request to Peace Corps for other documents that needed official clearance. The Areté Youth Foundation provided me with a work space during my research in Bulgaria. I received several Michigan State University (MSU) grants to fund the research and writing stage of this dissertation. The John and Ruth Useem Endowment Award from the Sociology Department helped finance my pre-dissertation research. The MSU Graduate School helped finance my data collection and write-up. In addition, I received several MSU Child Care grants, which secured the free time to work on my dissertation. Research for this dissertation was also supported in part by a fellowship from IREX (International Research & Exchanges Board) with funds provided by the United States Department of State through the Title VIII Program. Neither of these organizations are responsible for the views expressed herein.

Blacksburg, VA, May 2016

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS

APCD	Associate Peace Corps Director
ATIP	Anti-Trafficking in Persons
BG	Bulgaria(n)
CBJ	Congressional Budget Presentation or Congressional Budget Justification
CCIVS	Coordinating Committee for International Volunteer Service
CED	Community Economic Development
COD	Community and Organizational Development
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ENV	Environmental Training and Management
EU	European Union
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FY	Fiscal Year
GAD	Gender and Development
GAO	U.S. General Accounting Office
GLOW	Girls Leading Our World
HO	Host Organization
ICT	Information and Communications Technologies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JA	Junior Achievement
LO	Legacy Organization
NGO	Non-governmental Organization

PC	Peace Corps
PC/B	Peace Corps Bulgaria
PCBBTSLBC	Peace Corps/Bulgaria B27 Legacy Book Committee
PCPP	Peace Corps Partnership Program
PCR	Peace Corps Response
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
PDM	Project Design and Management
PST	Pre-Service Training
RPCV	Returned Peace Corps Volunteer
SBD	Small Business Development
SPA	Small Project Assistance
Ts	Trainees
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
V2	Volunteering and Service Learning
Vs	Volunteers
WID	Women in Development
YD	Youth Development

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

SOCIOLOGY OF POST-SOCIALISM(S)

In the wake of the 1989 “revolutions” in Eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, neoliberalism stood out as the dominant development framework of the time (Bockman 2011; Burawoy and Verdery eds. 1999; Hann 2006; Harvey 2005; Sachs 1993; Stiglitz 2002). Neoliberal policies or “radical market economic reforms with deregulation, macroeconomic stabilization, privatization, and the formation of a new social safety net” were implemented to some degree in all formerly socialist countries in Eastern Europe, except Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which remain largely unreformed (Aslund 2007). Still, if neoliberal policies won out as the preferred development approach for economic reforms, they were not implemented to the full exclusion of other development approaches. Many international government organizations (IGOs) and international non-government organizations (INGOs) stepped into national social policy making vacuums in the wake of the 1989 events (Deacon 1997) with some of them using alternative development approaches focusing on social and community wellbeing instead of emphasis on economic growth (Camphens 1997; Kenny 2002; Mohan and Stokke 2000).

However, since analysis of the day-to-day realities of post-socialism revealed that, through their own “agency,” people could craft micro-responses to the macro-policies of privatization, stabilization, and liberalization by absorbing, manipulating or in some cases rejecting neoliberal policies (Burawoy and Verdery eds. 1999; Mandell 2012), wouldn’t local people have responded similarly to alternative approaches of development? Such analyses require a multi-level relational perspective that focuses on the interaction between

outside/transnational actors and national and local contexts, as well as one that acknowledges the contradictory nature of transition processes where different actors try to engender competing development narratives and strategies.

The deployment of international development volunteer programs in the regions sits at the intersection of those dynamics. First, given that those programs emerged in the context of the Cold War and were designed by the First World to meet the development challenges of the Third World, their deployment in the former Second World represents a case of global relationality.¹ Second and more importantly, they can serve as a lens through which we can better understand the interaction between neoliberal and counter-neoliberal development mechanisms at multiple levels - international, national, local, and inter-personal. Yet, research on the role of international development volunteering in the region is very limited.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In the context of Eastern European transitions, researchers have examined aid to Eastern Europe and the power dynamics between donors, aid agencies, local aid contractors, and the recipients of aid (Mandel 2012; Orenstein et al. 2008; Wedel 1998). However, there has been little to no attempt to delineate neoliberal from alternative approaches to development. What was the nature of interaction between multiple development frameworks and actors in the region? How did neoliberal and alternative approaches coexist and with what implications?

¹ The terms First, Second, and Third World emerged in the context of the Cold War (Wolf-Phillips 1987). The First World included the rich, industrialized, and market-economy countries aligned with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the U.S., the Western European countries, Japan, Australia, and their allies. The Second World included the industrialized or industrializing centrally-directed economies aligned with the Communist Bloc (the U.S.S.R., China, Cuba, and their allies). The Third World was the countries that remained neutral or non-aligned with either NATO or the Communist Bloc.

This dissertation examines the interaction between neoliberal and alternative approaches to development in a post-socialist context using the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program as a case study. I use the notion of transition to complex interdependence (integration in regional and international organizations) as a framework to theorize and conceptualize the role of Peace Corps in the post-socialist development of Bulgaria and Bulgaria's insertion into processes of neoliberal globalization. I build a conceptual framework for the study of international development volunteering that separates mechanisms that promote neoliberal social transformation from alternative or counter-neoliberal mechanisms for social transformation. The research design utilizes a mixed-methods and multiple sources data collection strategy encompassing document analysis, surveys, interviews, focus groups, and participant observation informed by the actor-oriented approach to development studies. This approach allows me to examine how differently positioned actors in the Peace Corps/Bulgaria partnership structure - Peace Corps staff, Peace Corps volunteers, and their local partners – created and contested notions of “development” and the kind of social transformation that was enabled by Peace Corps during its operation in Bulgaria (1991 – 2013). I argue that Peace Corps/Bulgaria represents a case of a contradictory “real utopia”: a development model that simultaneously promotes, conforms to, and resists processes of neoliberalization; a model that has the potential to facilitate a transformation of the current global order towards a more equitable world based on the values of social and environmental justice rather than market rationality.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT VOLUNTEERING WITH PEACE CORPS

Peace Corps is one of the largest and more recognizable government international volunteer sending organizations in the world. Since 1961 it has sent more than 220,000

American volunteers to more than 140 countries to answer the call of President Kennedy “...to tackle the most pressing needs of people around the world.”² It is unique among the U.S. development tools,³ in that rather than focusing on state-led reforms and projects, it recruits and supplies development volunteers to provide *long-term technical assistance* to developing countries at *the local community level* (Rieffel 2005). This reflects the development field in the 1960s and 1970s, which was characterized by a shift away from structural macroeconomic change informed by modernization theory toward alternative people-centered approaches to development focusing on empowerment and local participation that emphasize agency. In the 1960s, Peace Corps embodied the contradiction between the idealism of the volunteers and the modernization project (Geidel 2015). In the 1970s, neoliberal theories also emerged as critiques of modernization theory and questioned the role of the state in development by advocating the positioning of the private sector (as opposed to the state) as the engine of economic growth (Payne and Phillips 2010). Thus, a second paradox has emerged, where essentializing and romanticizing “the local” presents a danger of co-opting community development from below into the neoliberal doctrine to the extent that local social inequalities and power relations are disembedded from the broader economic and political structures (Mohan and Stokke 2000).

Peace Corps policy states that it is committed to an “apolitical course” and “...prohibits volunteers from becoming involved in the political affairs of host countries” (Peace Corps 2014:85). *Depoliticized volunteer models* that focus on service provision emphasizing technical skills and work outcomes to meet project needs are also linked to the principles of neoliberalism

² Source: Peace Corps. 2015. “About.” Retrieved August 12, 2015 (<https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/>)

³ The main categories of official development assistance by the United States include bilateral aid in the form of grants (project and program aid, technical co-operation, development food aid, humanitarian aid, action related to debt, administrative costs and other grants), non-grants (new development lending, debt rescheduling, acquisition of equity and other) and multilateral aid to international and inter-governmental organizations such as various UN agencies, the European Council, the World Bank group, Regional Development Banks. Peace Corps fall under the technical co-cooperation bilateral aid grants category: Source: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. 2006. *OECD Development Assistance Peer Reviews: United States 2006*. OECD Publishing.

to the extent that they led to the decoupling of politics and policy and result in the cultivation of volunteers who care about people but are unable to care about the “big picture” (Eliasoph 2011). The disconnect between civil and political engagement is further linked to the professionalization of international volunteering and its emphasis on individual autonomy and multilayered governance (Baillie and Laurie 2011) and the argument that international volunteering serves as a channel for the transmission of the dominant neoliberal discourse and concepts of development (Georgeou 2012). However, since the Peace Corps is invited by the host country to furnish volunteers to work on mutually agreed upon programs at the state and local level, it is not simply a tool for a unilateral diffusion of knowledge about “development,” but should function as a platform for contesting and negotiating the development process similar to other foreign development organizations (Mandell 2012).

Until 1995, Peace Corps had one long-term volunteer program that allowed qualified American citizens to spend two years in a developing country. Then in 1995 it launched a new program called “Peace Corps Response”: a high-impact, 3-12 month assignment program for returned volunteers or professionals with at least 10 years of work experience. Most recently, in 2014, it added a third program called “Global Health Service Partnership”: a 1-year assignment program for volunteer physicians and nurses/midwives in medical and nursing schools abroad.⁴ The original 2-year volunteer program is known as the “Peace Corps” Volunteer Program and currently sends volunteers with assignments in the following sectors: agriculture, community economic development, education, environment, health, and youth in development. One-directional and especially short-term assignments like the newest Peace Corps programs have

⁴ Source: Peace Corps. 2015. “Volunteer Programs.” Retrieved August 21, 2015 (<https://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/>).

been implicated in the creation of neoliberal subjectivities (Lyons et al. 2012; Mostafanezhad 2014; Vrasti 2012).

In Eastern Europe, it was only after the fall of communist regimes in the region, after 1989, that those countries could seek volunteers for the first time to support their transition to democracy and a market economy.⁵ The latter was in tune with the dominant transition models arguing for the adoption of “Western” political institutions and implementation of neoliberal reforms aimed at the full inclusion of Eastern European economies in the global market. However, Peace Corps volunteers in the region were equally encouraged to work with minority groups, to empower young girls, and to promote environmental education and protection, activities that are often linked to alternative development approaches and the spread of counter-neoliberal global advocacy networks (Evans 2012). Today, programs in the region continue to indicate the mixing of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal volunteering:

Volunteers in EMA [Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia] serve in all of the agency’s six program sectors: Agriculture, Community Economic Development, Education, Environment, Health, and Youth in Development. In addition, many Volunteers incorporate cross-cutting sector programming priorities such as Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment, HIV/AIDS, and Volunteerism into their work with communities, schools, clinics, businesses, local nongovernmental organizations, municipal governments, and universities. (Peace Corps 2015:28).

Among the 23 Peace Corps programs in post-socialist countries that opened since 1989, I chose the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program on both theoretical and methodological grounds. Bulgaria was the fourth country to welcome Peace Corps volunteers in 1991 and one of two

⁵ Source: Peace Corps. 2015. “Milestones.” Retrieved August 12, 2015 (<https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/milestones/>).

programs to remain open after the country joined the European Union (EU). It operated for a total of 22 years, until 2013, making it one of two longest operating programs in the region. The long history of the program presents a unique opportunity for the capturing of development discourses immediately after the collapse of state socialism, through the years of negotiations for membership in the EU, and after the entry of the country in the EU. The fact that the program was closing at the time of my research was also beneficial in avoiding placing undue stress on former Peace Corps/Bulgaria staff, volunteers, and host organizations. In addition as a native Bulgarian speaker and having worked for Peace Corps/Bulgaria as a Technical Trainer (2000-2004) and being married to a Returned Peace Corps Volunteer (RPCV) from Bulgaria, I benefited from extensive access to various Peace Corps/Bulgaria networks that facilitated the data collection process.

RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

The main question is: **what was the role of Peace Corps in the post-socialist transition to complex interdependence.** I answer this question through analyses of the “discourses” on the role and impact of Peace Corps’ development activities in Bulgaria. The dissertation has one main objective and three secondary objectives.

Main objective: *To explain Peace Corps as a contradictory development model.*

Secondary Objectives:

- a. To analyze and understand the main mechanisms through which Peace Corps/Bulgaria supported and conformed to processes of neoliberalisation;
- b. To analyze and understand the main mechanisms through which Peace Corps/Bulgaria resisted and countered processes of neoliberalisation;

- c. To analyze and understand how neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms coexist and with what implications.

RESEARCH RELEVANCE

This dissertation seeks to bring post-socialist and development studies into a much-delayed conversation. Eastern Europe is rarely discussed in the general literature on development theory and practice. When mentioned at all, it is most often in relation to the importance of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European centrally-planned economies and the resultant changes in the global system. The latter however, has not resulted in comprehensive and systematic attempts at adjusting relevant theories in accordance with these changes (Martinussen 1997). Even the discussion of neoliberal views on development, which admittedly triumphed in Eastern Europe, center exclusively on the implementation of neoliberal policies in Africa and Latin America. When neoliberal developments in Eastern Europe are discussed, the arguments center almost exclusively on the Russian case. This is in line with a general trend according to which post-socialist Eastern Europe is approached as a problem of “transition” that is separate from the problems of “development” in the Third World understood as the poorest countries (Woods 2006).

DISSERTATION STRUCTURE

The dissertation includes 10 chapters that are organized thematically. In Chapter 2 and 3 I develop the conceptual framework for the analysis. I begin by defining the main theoretical concepts underlying the dissertation including the main approaches and conceptions of neoliberalism and the main differences between volunteering, international volunteering and international development volunteering. I also identify specific mechanisms through which

volunteering can promote, conform to, resist and counter processes of neoliberalization. Having outlined the conceptual framework I move to the specifics of the regional Eastern European and Bulgarian contexts including the rationale for international development volunteering in each context. I discuss changes in the goals of transition: from the challenges of dual transition (democracy and economy building) to the challenge of transitioning to complex interdependence, including EU integration. I finish with a discussion of Peace Corps' goals and the debate about Peace Corps' entry into Eastern Europe.

Chapter 4 describes and explains the main components of the research design including: the use of a case study informed by the actor-oriented approach as a research strategy, the use of mixed methods and multiple sources of data as a data collection strategy, the use of top-down and bottom-up approaches in the development discourse analysis of the data, and the use of participatory approach in the research process as a strategy to deal with the main data collection and analysis challenges.

Chapter 5 introduces the main features of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria Program including: the different types of volunteer assignments, the number and profile of volunteers, their training, the number and profile of the volunteer host organizations and communities, and the profile of the local Peace Corps staff. This basic profile of the organization is framed with information about the opening and closure of the program.

Following the description of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program, in Chapters 6 and 7, I examine the public and private discourses on the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria's post-socialist transformation. The analysis of the public discourse follows a top-down approach and focuses on four types of discourses that vary in their intended audience. The joint government legal discourse aimed at current and potential members of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria partnership

structure. The U.S. government/Peace Corps discourse aimed at the American public, the new volunteers, and the Bulgarian public. The Bulgarian government discourse aimed at the Bulgarian public and the volunteer discourse aimed at members of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria partnership structure. The analysis of the private discourse on the role of Peace Corps/Bulgaria utilizes a bottom-up approach and contrasts the opinions of the main actors - the Bulgarian local staff, the volunteers, and the local partners - to the public discourse findings. Both analyses identify neoliberal and counter-neoliberal articulations of the Peace Corps Goals and the goals of the post-socialist transition.

Chapter 8 historicizes the deployment of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria model. Here I describe and analyze the evolution of the different sector projects, supplementary programs and external resources, as well as the type of best practices that Peace Corps/Bulgaria decided to celebrate on its closure. The focus is on the interaction of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms within the various Peace Corps/Bulgaria activities (meso-level analysis)

Chapter 9 investigates competing notions about Peace Corps' development model among the key actors. This is a micro-level analysis of the opinions about whether or not Peace Corps/Bulgaria enabled neoliberal development, the strengths and limitations of the Peace Corps development model, and the participants' assessments on how Peace Corps had impacted them personally. The focus is on whether the key actors exhibit neoliberal and counter-neoliberal subjectivity (micro-level analysis).

The final chapter summarizes the findings from the case study and how those contribute to larger questions about transition/social transformation in a global context. I conclude with a discussion on the implications of this study for policy and future research on international development volunteering.

CHAPTER 2: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a conceptual framework for the study of international development volunteering. I begin by identifying the main approaches and conceptions of neoliberalism: neoliberalism as a policy package, as an ideology, and as a form of governance as well as possible alternatives to existing neoliberalisms. Then I outline the main differences between volunteering, international volunteering and international development volunteering. Having defined the main terms and approaches in both study areas, I discuss arguments that link neoliberalism(s) with volunteering and especially international development volunteering to identify specific mechanisms through which volunteering can promote, conform to, resist and counter processes of neoliberalization. I find that the coexistence of those mechanisms is embedded in the duality of volunteering which in turn can facilitate a particular “symbiotic” mode towards a post-neoliberal future. I conclude with a discussion of the limitations of the framework.

THE STUDY OF NEOLIBERALISM(S)

There is growing consensus that neoliberalism is an economic model or paradigm around the ideal of the self-regulating market with three intertwined manifestations: (1) a policy package, (2) ideology, and (3) a mode of governance (Larner 2006; Steger and Roy 2010). Each of the three manifestations emanate from different theoretical perspectives: a development or an applied perspective when the success and failure of neoliberal policies is concerned, a critical theory perspective that explains the ascendance of neoliberal policies as the dominant

development paradigm in political/class terms, and a post-structuralist perspective that explains the neoliberal turn as a process of reconfiguration of the social reality that produces governmentality (new modes of governance for new political subjects). An overview of the three perspectives is shown in Table 1.

Development Perspective: Neoliberalism as a Policy

Policy is the domain of practitioners who argue over the agents, methods, and objectives or goals of development. From a neoliberal perspective, the goal of development is *economic growth*, and the methods entail various strategies to reduce market distortions (Nederveen Pieterse 2010:7). As a development approach neoliberal policies are the antithesis of the welfare state. The main neoliberal policies include: *deregulation* of the economy, *liberalization* of trade and industry, and *privatization* of state-owned enterprises, including the withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision. This is sometimes referred to as the D-L-P Formula for development (Steger and Roy 2010).

This approach gained popularity in the 1970s in response to what was seen as the failure of state-led development and the call for a shift in the agency of development from the state to the market (Rapley 2007:77). The first wave of national neoliberal reforms began with the neoliberal experiments in Chile in the mid-1970s by the “Chicago Boys” (a group of economists educated at the University of Chicago) and reforms in the 1980s under Ronald Reagan in the U.S. (Raegonomics) and with Margaret Thatcher in the U.K. (Thatcherism) (Harvey 2005; Klein

2007). Those were followed by a second wave of reforms in the 1990s by Bill Clinton in the U.S. (market globalism) and Tony Blair in the U.K. (Third Way).⁶

The “Washington Consensus”⁷ imposed neoliberal reforms through *structural adjustment programs* (SAPs) as a precondition for debt relief in Africa and Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s. In Eastern Europe, following the collapse of state socialism in the early 1990s, many former state-socialist countries implemented SAPs along with full or partial *Shock Therapy*⁸ radical economic reforms aimed to destroy what remained of the old state-owned market system, and enable the spontaneous creation of the new private market system (Burawoy and Verdery eds. 1999; Bockman 2011; Klein 2007). This approach is very similar in its logic to the one-size-fits-all approach of the Washington Consensus reforms but “...it went further and was more specific” (Aslund 2007:32).

Analysis of neoliberalism as a set of policies focuses on the success and failure of those policies (Portes 1997; Rapley 2007). If failure is acknowledged, it is often linked to theoretical weaknesses of the economic theories that underpinned those policies: the assumption that humans are rational actors, that markets can self-regulate, that the neoliberal model is applicable universally, that policy prescriptions can be deduced from idealized models, and that the state and the market are assumed to be in a conflicting instead of a symbiotic relationship (Rapley 2007). Advocates of neoliberalism are more likely to attribute failures to improper implementation of the policies. More importantly, the failure of neoliberal policies is often

⁶ First and second wave neoliberal reforms also known as “roll-back neoliberalism” (first wave) and “roll-out neoliberalism” (second wave). The distinction was introduced by Peck and Tickell (2002) to separate the destructive or “roll-back” from the creative or “roll-out” neoliberal policies.

⁷ The term “Washington Consensus” was coined by John Williamson (1990, 1997) and refers to a list of ten policy reforms or policy instruments of what it took to develop including: fiscal discipline by setting limits on budgetary deficits, reducing public expenditures, tax reform to broaden the base, market-driven instead of state-driven interest rates, competitive exchange rates, trade liberalization, encouraging foreign direct investments, privatization, deregulation of economic activity, and securing property rights (Peet and Hartweek 2009:85).

⁸ Shock Therapy refers to the set of policies that economists Jeffrey Sachs and David Lipton advised be implemented as the best strategy of transition to a market economy (Lipton and Sachs 1990).

defined in moral terms: "...in focusing on the virtues of rolling back the state, neoliberal policies have overlooked the problems this process would beget" (Rapley 2007:87). The latter include increasing social inequality and political instability by threatening democracy and the rule of law, and fueling ethnic and religious conflicts.

In the development literature there are examples when neoclassical economics is used to describe neoliberal development (Rapley 2007; Martinussen 1997) or when neoclassical and neoliberal are used interchangeably (McGuigan 2014). Others argue that we should not conflate the two because "[n]eoliberalism is to neoclassical economics as astrology is to astronomy" (Rodrik 2002:2). Bockman (2011) goes on to explain that it is often assumed that the state-market dichotomy is the only axis that concerns neoclassical economists in their development theories and policies. In her analysis she points out that, according to neoclassical models both competitive markets and central planning were mathematically identical: each could produce optimal results in production, distribution, and consumption (market equilibrium). Thus, neoclassical economists could be both pro-state and pro-market. What they differed on concerned another axis in their models – hierarchy-democracy – or the need for particular institutions that can enable competitive markets or central planning to function. Here, "[n]eoclassical economists claimed that both competitive markets and central planning require either (1) hierarchical institutions or (2) decentralized, egalitarian, democratic institutions" (Bockman 2011:9). In this sense, the anti-state approach of neoliberal development policies is a reflection of the politics of the economists that promoted them, not of neoclassical economics theory. The paradox is that the implementation of neoliberal reforms requires a strong authoritarian state.

Critical Perspective: Neoliberalism as Ideology

Conceptualizations of neoliberalism as ideology or a philosophical or a political project define it as a system of beliefs according to which human well-being is best advanced by “...liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade” (Harvey 2005:2). The role of the state according to neoliberals is to create and preserve an institutional framework that enables this vision. The roots of this ideology are often traced to the works of Friedrich von Hayek and Milton Friedman, who developed radical free market ideas that form the core of neoliberalism (Srubar 1996), as well as to networks of right-wing think tanks such as the Mont Pelerin Society or the Chicago School of Economics that provided safe space for internal debates among various groups of neoliberals about how neoliberalism can distinguish itself from its three primary foes: laissez-faire classical liberalism, social welfare liberalism, and socialism (Mirowski and Plehwe eds. 2009; Klein 2007).

When the evolution of neoliberalism from a marginal theory into a hegemonic paradigm is examined from a neo-Marxist, structuralist, feminist or an otherwise critical perspective the focus of analysis centers on the 1970s and the neoliberal turn: the circumstance that allowed the transformation of neoliberalism from a marginal theory into: “...what became the conventional wisdom, that neoliberal policy is the best economic science had to offer; and what has become the unconventional, dissident belief, that neoliberalism is a recipe for global economic, social and environmental disaster” (Peet 2003:14).

Harvey, for whom neoliberalism is a project of reorganization of capitalist accumulation in a context of economic crisis, suggests that the endorsement of neoliberalism by the institutions of civil society, by the media, political parties, and ultimately state power was part of a

“...*political* project to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore or create the power of economic elites” (2005:196). In the 1970s, the economic crisis and the growing popularity for socialist alternatives to the crisis across much of Europe, in many developing countries, and even in the US, were clear threats to the economic elite. In order to protect themselves the upper classes used their disproportionate influence over academia, the media, and the political process to persuade the masses that neoliberalism was the best and only alternative. The process of neoliberalization involved much “creative destruction” through deregulation, liberalization, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision, the result of which is uneven geographical development and increasing structural inequalities worldwide. These results, according to Harvey, are clear evidence that neoliberalization is a failure when the public aims of universal well-being are considered. As a political project, however, it “...has succeeded remarkably well in restoring, or in some instances (as in Russia and China) creating, the power of economic elites” (Harvey 2005:19).

In critiques of the neoliberal project there is also often a direct link between neoliberalism and globalization, where neoliberalism is posited as the political driving force behind globalization understood as global capitalism and imperialism (Bockman 2011; Brenner and Theodore eds. 2002; Cherny 2008; Harvey 2005; Klein 2007; Mirowski and Plehwe eds. 2009; Peet 2003). The implications are that globalization, meaning neoliberal or capitalist globalization, is perceived as an intentional rather than a natural process. Consequently, it can be reversed, or at least steered, in a new direction.

Wacquant (2012) critiques the critical neoclassical/neo-Marxist approaches to neoliberalism as an ideology/political project for offering too neat and coherent, if not monolithic, views of neoliberalism. Larner concludes the contrary, that theorizations of

neoliberalism as ideology “...are more likely to reveal a complex and hybrid political imagery, rather than straightforward and coherent philosophy” (2000:12). Indeed, the analysis of the Mont Pelerin Society thought collective shows that neoliberalism needs to be thought of as plural in terms of both political philosophy and political practice (Mirowski and Plehwe eds. 2009). Others see the plurality of actually existing neoliberalisms as the result of the imposition of neoliberalism at a range of spatial scales, from the global to the continental to the national and the local, and therefore neoliberalism takes context-, territory-, and/or place-specific forms (Brenner and Theodore eds. 2008).

Altogether, the self-proclaimed purpose of critical theory analysis is to destabilize the ideological hegemony of neoliberalism and to propose some alternative thinking that can create a better world, “a more multicultural, egalitarian, democratic, and ecological world” (Keller 2002). In this light, Connell (2007) argues that many globalization texts have a performative role. They are not trying to describe or analyze social reality but rather to prescribe and to create social reality.

Poststructuralist Perspective: Neoliberalism as Governmentality

Approaches to *neoliberalism as a form of governmentality* build upon Foucault’s lectures on the *Birth of Biopolitics* (2008), where he offers a more comprehensive concept of government that ranges from “governing the self” to “governing others.” In his historical reconstruction of the genealogy of the modern state, Foucault distinguishes between two forms of neoliberalism - the German post-war liberalism or ordo-liberalism and the liberalism of the Chicago school or American neoliberalism – which differ in their concepts of society and proposed political solutions. The key distinction is that, whereas the ordo-liberals are “stressing the logic of pure

competition on the economic terrain, while framing the market through a set of state interventions (theory of the “policy of society”), [neoliberals are] seeking to extend the rationality of the market to domains hitherto considered to be non-economic (theory of “human capital”)” (Foucault 2008:329). In essence, neoliberalism is not simply a politico-economic project that seeks to limit the powers of government, or to maintain the powers of the economic elite. It is a novel form of governing that creates a new mentality of who we are as people and how we should relate to one another; it is a technology for the creation of a whole new social reality where *homo economicus* as a partner of exchange is replaced with *homo economicus* as an entrepreneur of himself. This means that under neoliberalism “every human being is assumed to think and act as an entrepreneur with the result that the impersonal laws of the market are drawn into all areas of human activity” (Hann 2006:7).

Ong (2006) develops further the notion of market-driven or neoliberal calculation and argues that the spread of neoliberalism as a new mode of political optimization is an unevenly articulated historical process. In other words, as neoliberalism as a technology of government is introduced in new sites of transformation such as in liberal democracies, postcolonial, authoritarian, and post-socialist situations in East and Southeast Asia, so are exceptions from neoliberal calculation. The latter can mean extraordinary departures in policy, which may be deployed to include, as well as to exclude people from access to social benefits. For example political decisions can both preserve welfare benefits for citizens and exclude noncitizens from the benefits of capitalist development.

An example of a neoliberal form of governance is the “*new public management*” model in public administration (or new managerialism) that calls for the deployment of government technologies from the private for-profit world - strategic plans, risk-management, cost-benefit

analyses, best practices, performance-based plans, etc. - by government institutions (Steger and Roy 2010). In contrast to neoliberalism as an ideology where the market expands into the areas that the state was forced to withdraw from, in neoliberalism as a form of governance, the market permeates the state: "...the government adopts the self-regulating free market as *the* model for proper government" (Steger and Roy 2010:12).

In the U.S., the new managerialism model became popular in the 1980s under Reagan's "re-inventing the government" approach and was put in practice in the 1990s through initiatives such as the U.S. National Performance Review of government agencies to increase administrative efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability and the 1996 Child Welfare Reform; in the U.K. new managerialism was introduced through New Labor's "Third Way"⁹ social policies (Steger and Roy 2010). These reforms included the *outsourcing of state responsibilities* to non-profit and for-profit organizations through competitive contracts "...with NGOs running health and education services to a considerable extent now in some countries" (United Nations Volunteers [UNV] 2015:36). The outsourcing of state responsibilities through contracts is also known as the project-funding regime (Gibson et al. 2007). Altogether, the new management model redefines citizens as "customers" or "clients" and public servants as managers of state "enterprises" and injects neoliberal entrepreneurial values of self-interest, competitiveness, and decentralization into government and non-government policies and practices. The end result is the creation of the ideal "normal" neoliberal citizen consumer (Jenkins 2005).

The logic behind neoliberal governance was to design government programs with measurable objectives that can be assessed in relation to costs. The problem is that the true benefits of many programs, especially social programs, are observable and measurable in the

⁹ The implementation of New Labor's "Third Way" happened within a discourse of neo-communitarianism: a reliance on and the transfer of welfare responsibilities to the voluntary sector, through discourses of partnership, good governance and citizenship (Jenkins 2005).

long, not the short term, if at all (Steger and Roy 2010:44). Yet, the appeal of the neoliberal mode of governance is in the promise that it empowers individuals and smaller local units by promoting decentralized government. The development of voluntary systems of self-help and mutual assistance creates solidarity with others at the micro-level, but at the same time it disintegrates solidarity at the macro-level (Nihei 2010). The guarantor of social rights is no longer the welfare state; instead the voluntary sector treats those as social needs, which altogether dismisses the notion of social rights. Moreover, when the voluntary sector acts on behalf of the government and is subcontracted by the corporate sector it loses its independence and ability to serve as a corrective to the state and the market by questioning trends, policies, and laws (UNV 2015; Watado 2007). It is no longer a legitimate part of the civil society because: “It would be unable to sustain ideas of ‘publicness’ which involve speaking up for social justice and building social solidarity with other parts of civil society, trade unions and local councils in an alliance which values social protection as well as emancipator movement” (Murray 2013:17).

The incorporation of the voluntary sector in the neoliberal model is accompanied by its increasing professionalization resulting in the marginalization and exclusion of volunteers (because they lack the expertise to design and deliver social service) or their subjection to training courses (Jenkins 2005). This also polarizes the voluntary field that now includes professionalized organizations that have become an integral part of government strategies and independent grassroots organizations.

Further, neoliberal governance combines fundamentally different practices resulting in “monstrous hybrids” (Jacobs in Murray 2013:14). A prime example is the concept of *social capital*, especially when the use of a very specific and narrow social capital (bridging or scaled up social capital) based on social cohesion and flows of information in the pursuit of efficient

service delivery rather than the rich overlapping social fabric of a society founded on reciprocity, common well-being and dense networks, but a narrow social capital is applied (Jenkins 2005).

The poststructuralist approach in conceptualizing neoliberalism as governmentality is sometimes accused of being “too messy” (Wacquant 2012), while its main contribution is that it clarifies the difference between government and governance and that less government does not necessarily mean less governance (Larner 2008:12). The political implications of this approach are subtler. For instance, Collier (2012) argues that non-structuralist approaches can reframe the critical inquiry of neoliberalism not only as criticisms of the politics of the right, but also as an opportunity to rethink the politics of the left.

The common thread in all articulations of neoliberalism is that they are all concerned with the issue of social justice and equality. Social justice, however, carries different meanings (value) in the neoliberal and anti-neoliberal visions of the perfect world. In the neoliberal world, social justice is undesirable because it erodes the “virtue” of the market (measures of “social justice” can distort competition and prevent the market from functioning as it should), while in the anti-neoliberal world, social injustice is undesirable because it limits certain human rights and freedoms (Hayek 1944). This is a case of a clash of two worlds: the merchant and the civic worlds (Busch 2011). In the merchant world or marketplace the focus is on commodification - turning everything into items that can be bought and sold, while in the civic world, the focus is on creating and measuring the qualities of public goods. Neoliberalism works by expanding the market-logic to all worlds. In this sense *all critiques of neoliberalism perform the function of sites of resistance against the colonization of the social lifeworld by the market-driven rationality.*

Table 1: Neoliberal Manifestations by Theoretical Approach and Conceptualization

<i>Approach</i>	<i>Conception</i>	<i>Manifestation</i>
Development (Economics)	Practice: neoliberal policies that support economic growth through state restructuring and the agency of the market	• Deregulation of the economy: removal of any regulations that may constrain the free movement of goods, services, capital and people (labor market flexibility, export-oriented policies, encouraging foreign-direct investment) • Liberalization of trade and industry: market friendly reregulation (tight fiscal and monetary policy, reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers, freeing the exchange rate, lower corporate taxes) • Privatization of state-owned enterprises • Anti-welfarism: withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision • Washington Consensus: Structural adjustment programs (SARs); Shock Therapy
Critical/Neo-Marxist (Harvey 2005)	Ideology/Political Project: neoliberalism is the new phase of global capitalism	• Promotion of a belief system around individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills as well as private property rights, free markets and free trade • New/enhanced conditions for capital accumulation through: (1) privatization and commodification; (2) financialization; (3) the management and manipulation of crisis; (4) state redistribution of the economy • Deepening and widening of transnational economic connections through global free trade • Increasing social inequalities within and between countries
Post-Structuralism (Foucault)	Governmentality: neoliberalism is a new form of governance that seeks to extend market rationality to non-economic domains AND to create new political subjects	• Marketization: adoption of the “New public management” model based on market logic; • Commodification: turning everything into items that can be bought and sold • Government by proxy: transferring management functions from the state to the private/non-profit sectors (contracting out of state responsibilities for the provision of health, education, water and sanitation, and security and administrative functions such as the issuing of licenses, collection of fees and rates, issuing of fines, etc.) • Post-Washington consensus: “good governance” • Shift from civil (citizens) society to consumer (clients) society

Post-Neoliberalism: Alternatives to Neoliberalism

Since the late 1990s, the hegemony of the neoliberal doctrine has been challenged by popular discontent and protests worldwide, including the rebellion of the Zapatistas in Mexico in 1994, the protests at the Seattle meeting of the World Trade Organization in 1999, and most recently by the Occupy Movement following the 2008-2010 Global Recession. Neoliberalism was pronounced as suffering from a “legitimacy crisis” due to its inability, or unwillingness, to deal with the issues of global inequality and to prevent financial, food, and ecological crisis (McMichael 2016). Accordingly, the political and academic discourse on neoliberalism has shifted from an anti-neoliberal (what is wrong with neoliberalism) to a post-neoliberal discourse on alternatives to neoliberalism (how to resist and replace or overcome neoliberalism).

In the development field alternative development encompasses a variety of approaches that seek to replace the neoliberal market-centered model. When the emphasis is on alternative development agency and methods, alternative development combines the aims of development and emancipation and shifts the development agency from the market and the state to the community and informal sector or the third civil society sector (Naderveen Pieterse 2010:94). The focus on community development or development from below, as a form of “social mobilization” that promotes *decentralized development*, however, presents a danger of co-opting community development from below into the neoliberal doctrine, to the extent that local social inequalities and power relations are disembedded from the broader economic and political structures (Mohan and Stokke 2000). Neoliberal cooptation is also at play when the government divests itself from the provision of certain services through welfare privatization – the discontinuity of service and relief programs, and instead, contracting those out to nonprofit organizations working towards local community development (Black 1999). In turn, this has led

to the “professionalization” of community development work, and the consequent marginalization of informal grass-roots community activities (Kenny 2002).

When the emphasis is on alternative development objectives or values of development, alternative development approaches de-emphasize the centrality of economic growth as the measure of human well-being. For example, human development, which promotes the capacitation of people (following the work of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum), measures development by combining indicators of life expectancy, educational attainment, and income. Sustainable development incorporates social and ecological resilience in its model. These “alternative approaches,” however, have been accused of merely adding social practices onto neoliberal logics and thus creating merely a new variant of neoliberal development known as “inclusive neoliberalism” (Craig and Porter 2006). A different kind of alternative development objective is the refutation of development as modernization or Westernization and the promotion of endogenous development understood as modernization from within (Nederveen Pieterse 2010). The problem with endogenous development is that it can choose to express itself as ethno-fundamentalism.

Critical approaches to neoliberalism envision alternatives to neoliberalism understood as socialist alternatives to capitalism and globalization and/or a post-neoliberal mode of regulation around the dual goal of (1) creating new forms of redistributive politics where market economies are redirected towards social concerns and (2) the deepening of democracy through the revival of political participation or active citizenship.¹⁰ The agents of these alternatives are most often

¹⁰ Some examples include Wright’s “socialist compass” towards seven alternatives to capitalism - (1) statist socialism, (2) social democratic statist regulation, (3) associational democracy, (4) social capitalism, (5) cooperative market economy, (6) social economy, and (7) participatory socialism - through “...greater degree of social empowerment over the ownership, use and control of economic resources and activities” (2010:128). Leslie Sklair’s (2002) proposal for a path of transition from capitalist globalization to socialist globalization through the gradual elimination of the culture-ideology of consumerism and its replacement with the culture-ideology of human rights. Schoonmaker’s call for an alternative globalization from below through information technologies (free and open

associated with the efforts of the new left and the new global social movements. Evans (2000) outlines three kinds of transnational action for counter-hegemonic globalization: (1) transnational advocacy networks around issues like human rights, women's rights, and the destruction of the natural environment, (2) transnational consumer/labor networks focusing on working conditions and levels of subsistence, and (3) the labor movement demanding the spread of global "core labor standards."

In light of the assessment that existing neoliberalisms are hybrids or transmutations that exist in a kind of parasitic relation to the social formations that host them (Peck 2006:732), there is a shared understanding that alternatives to neoliberalism cannot be defined as wholly distinct from neoliberalism and that there are multiple paths of social transformation towards post-neoliberal futures that can be pursued simultaneously (Yates and Bakker 2014). Therefore, different conceptions of the process of post-neoliberal transformation account for a variety of modes and degrees to which post-neoliberal principles and practices may be put in place. The latter can emerge through challenges not only in reaction to neoliberal logics but outside of neoliberal logics altogether.

THE STUDY OF VOLUNTEERING

According to some estimates there are more than one billion volunteers worldwide hence "[i]f 'Volunteerland' were a country, only China would have a larger working age population" (Haldane in UNV 2015:13). The interest in the study of volunteering and volunteerism understood as "voluntary, deliberate service to others over time and without compensation" (Baumeister and Vochs 2007) has grown along with the increased recognition of the importance

source software) that create digital commons "...where new forms of collectivity and grassroots participation in economic, political, social and cultural life become possible" (2007:1018). Yates & Bakker (2014) identifies specific postneoliberal modes of regulation around the theme of re-founding economic principles on social values.

of volunteering for domestic and international development.¹¹ In the social sciences “volunteering” is different from “voluntarism” because while the first concerns a practice the latter centers on “...the philosophical issue of free will: namely, the belief that choice means freedom, in the sense of individuals being free to will what they will” (Scott and Marshall 2009).

Volunteering

Volunteering is a universal phenomenon that is expressed in different ways around the globe (UNV 2011). It is rooted in religious and charitable practices as well as in the activities of civic associations in pursuit of various political, economic, and social causes. Worldwide, there is great variability in the degree of formality, duration (short-term, mid-term, or long-term commitments), format (individual and in groups), sites (face-to-face and online; at home or abroad), the purpose or expression of volunteering (mutual support, provision of services/assistance to a third party, civic participation), as well as the profile of volunteers (according to age, gender, ethnicity, class, skill set, and employment status).¹²

Currently, there is no universal definition of volunteering, and countries define volunteering in various ways with many lacking any official definition for volunteering (Mathou 2010:50; UNV 2011). This poses significant difficulties in the measurement and the consistent and systematic comparisons of volunteering across countries and over time.¹³ However, a growing number of inter-governmental organizations and national state statistics offices have

¹¹ In 1985, the United Nations proclaimed December 5 as the International Volunteer day and 2001 as International Year of Volunteers. On the 10th anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers, the European Commission declared 2011 as the European Year of Volunteering.

¹² Employee volunteering in private-for-profit employers, public employers, and third sector (NGOs) employers is considering one of the newest trends in volunteering (Perez et al. 2013)

¹³ Different approaches to measurement - like the Gallup World Poll, the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP), The World Values Survey and the CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI) - use different definitions and methods and came to different conclusions about the volume and nature of volunteering across the world and its economic value (Powell 2015:11).

endorsed the International Labor Organization (ILO) *Manual on the Measurement of Volunteering* definition of volunteer work: “Unpaid non-compulsory work; that is, time individuals give without pay to activities performed either through an organization or directly for others *outside the household of the volunteer worker or of related family members.*”¹⁴

The UNV Program further clarifies that: service obligations stipulated by law, contract or academic requirement should be excluded from the definition of volunteering as those conflict with the free will or non-compulsory nature of volunteer work; that some reimbursement of expenses or a stipend-type payment or payments in kind maybe justified; and that the purpose of volunteer activities should be for the common good (Leigh 2011). The latter is perhaps the most contentious part of the definition as what the “common good” is may be grounded in competing/opposing value systems. The UNV position in this regard is that “activities, involving, or inciting violence that harm society” are incompatible with the core values of volunteerism: compassion and cooperation.

As an individual behavior the study of volunteering is often approached within a social psychology perspective with a focus on theories that aim to explain volunteering as a behavior, the experience of volunteering, and the impact of volunteering on objective and subjective well-being (Wilson 2000, 2012). Volunteering is often embedded in the work of voluntary or civic organizations¹⁵ that are run by volunteer boards of directors and often rely on volunteers to conduct their activities. Faith-based organizations, government and intergovernmental organizations, and corporations/business also manage volunteer schemes or partner with and sponsor already existing voluntary organizations. At the organizational level, volunteering is

¹⁴ Source: The Center for Civil Society Studies (CCSS). 2015. “Volunteer Measurements FAQs.” Retrieved August 12, 2015 (<http://ccss.jhu.edu/research-projects/vmp/project-resources/volunteer-measurement-faqs/>).

¹⁵ Voluntary and civic organizations also called non-governmental organizational (NGOs) or non-profit organizations.

placed in a broader social and economic context and approached from a nonprofit and civil society perspectives (Dekkek 2003; Eliasoph 2012; Rochester et al. 2010). There is also substantial literature on volunteering from a management and marketing perspectives.¹⁶

International Volunteering

International volunteering (also called international voluntary service) concerns voluntary activities abroad and is among the more structured forms of volunteering (Coordinating Committee for International Volunteer Service [CCIVS] 2015; Comhlámh 2013; McBride and Daftary 2005; Sherradan et al. 2006). The first international volunteers were missionaries who traveled to colonies for the purpose of developing or “civilizing” the local population; then, in the early twentieth century an international voluntary service movement emerged in Europe around efforts to promote international peace and post-war reconstruction after World War I. Post-World War II there were two main forms of international volunteering: (1) volunteering for the promotion of international peace and understanding around the work camp movement and cross-cultural exchanges, and (2) volunteering for humanitarian relief and development to provide short-term humanitarian assistance in the immediate aftermath of crisis such as military conflicts and disasters and long-term development assistance during time of peace to improve the well-being of people.

Today, there are various typologies of international volunteering that distinguish between different types of volunteer service, recruitment models, thematic areas or sectors, types of volunteers involved, the specific nature of volunteer assignments/programs, and the impact of

¹⁶ In April 2015, GoogleScholar found about 566,000 results for volunteer management and another 186,000 results for volunteer marketing and there are also dedicated journals on the topic including the *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing*, the *International Journal of Volunteer Administration*, and *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, among others.

volunteering on the host communities (Butcher 2005; Carpata et al. 2009; Comhlámh 2013; CCIVS 2011; Lough 2013; Robert et al 2005; Sherraden et al. 2006; Rieffel 2005). The problem with those typologies is that the different categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. Many volunteer sending organizations¹⁷ have diversified the types of opportunities they offer: from short term and long-term cross-cultural understanding programs; to humanitarian relief, peace-keeping and peace-building programs; to short-term and long-term volunteering for development; to service learning opportunities in partnership with universities and corporations. Sending and receiving organizations can include one or more different types of organizations such as faith-based and secular non-profit organizations, educational institutions, local, national and international governments, corporations, for-profit tourism agencies, and diaspora communities.

The degree of involvement of the receiving organizations in the decision-making about the recruitment, training, placement, and management of volunteers ranges from minimal, where the process is controlled entirely by the sending organizations, to full and equal collaboration between the receiving and sending organizations. There are unilateral, bilateral, multilateral, and transnational international volunteering programs, the direction of which can be North-to-North, North-to-South, South-to-North, South-to-South, or multi-directional, as well as reciprocal exchanges. The specific features of the international volunteer assignments like subject matter, duration, location, format, training, the cost to the volunteer, and the profile of volunteers can be as diverse as those for domestic voluntary work. Therefore, more scholars distinguish between dimensions than forms or types of international volunteering service (Sherraden et al. 2006).

¹⁷ International volunteer sending organizations are also called International Volunteer Co-operation Organizations (IVCOs); International Volunteer Sending Agencies (IVSAs), International Volunteer Involving Organizations (IVIOs); International Volunteer Service Organizations (IVSOs).

International Development Volunteering

International development volunteering (also known as international volunteering for development or IV4D) intersects the wider contexts of volunteering and development theory and practice. Historically, the meaning of development in international volunteering has changed along with shifts in the dominant development perspectives (Comhlámh 2013). In this section I summarize these changes in the meaning of development following Nederveen Pieterse's periodization of development perspectives as outlined in his overview of *Development Theory* (2010). An overview of the different perspectives is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Meanings of Development over Time

Period	Perspectives	Meanings of Development
1940>	Development Economics	Economic Growth-industrialization
1950>	Modernization Theory	Growth, political and social mobilization
1960>	Dependency Theory	Accumulation – national, autocentric
1970>	Alternative Development	Human flourishing
1980>	Human Development	Capacitation, enlargement of people's choices
	Neoliberalism	Economic Growth – structural reform, deregulation, liberalization, privatization
1990>	Post-development	Authoritarian engineering, disaster
2000	Millennium Development Goals	Structural reforms

Source: Partial reproduction of Table 1.1. *Meanings of development over time* (Nederveen Pieterse 2010:7).

Many international volunteer development programs began in the context of the Cold War and processes of decolonization after WWII informed by modernization theory. In the 1950s the dominant development approach supported the imitation of Western developed societies by the former underdeveloped colonies and then shifted to the pursuit of national independence followed in a few cases by the introduction of socialism in the 1960s, or attempts at fused transformations based on the dialectical modernization theory proposing the creation of hybrid societies that combined both modern (Western) and traditional elements (Martinussen

1997). Accordingly, international development programs focused on sending volunteers from the West to transfer technical skills and knowledge to local organizations and people living in the underdeveloped countries (then called Third World). Some of the largest International Volunteer Sending Agencies (IVSAs) were established in the 1960s and 1970s and include the British *Voluntary Service Overseas* (1958), the U.S. *Peace Corps* (1961), *Australian Volunteers International* (1961), *Canadian University Service Organization* (1961), *FK Norway/Fredskorpset* (1963), *Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers* (1965), and *Volontari nel Mondo – FOCSIV* (1972). The *United Nations Volunteers Program* (1970) is an exception in using volunteers from both the developed and the developing countries.

By the 1970s, “[d]evelopment specialists increasingly observed that the benefits of economic growth were not necessarily trickling down to the impoverished masses” (Babb 2009:4), which together with the critique of the neocolonial underpinnings of modernization theory by dependency theorists in the 1960s encouraged a shift in the development discourse in the 1970s from the one-sided focus on growth as the determining factor in progress, to alternative definitions of development focusing on *the capacity to make and implement decisions* (Babb 2009; Martinusssen 1997). The new alternative approaches claimed that people’s participation was useful for promoting development (Martinusssen 1997) and called for “...bottom-up, and endogenous vision of development free from colonial and technoeconomic shackles” (Peet and Hartwick 1999:141). In this context, many international volunteer programs adopted *participatory*-development approaches and “[t]he emphasis in development shifted to working with rather than for the disadvantaged” (McBride 2005:7).

In the 1980s, the development discourse was dominated by two perspectives – neoliberalism, which focused on economic growth through state restructuring and human

development through capacity building following Amartya Sen's work on *Commodities and Capabilities* (1985).¹⁸ While each expressed competing views about the goals of development they were similar in continuing to advocate for development from below: a form of "social mobilization" promoting *decentralized development* (Camfens 1997; Mohan and Stokke 2000). Accordingly, during this period international volunteering was framed as practice that "...emphasizes the agency of local communities, empowerment, equal partnerships and social justice" (Comhlámh 2013:21).

In the 2000s, international volunteering was recognized by the Economic and Social Council of the UN as "...an important component of any strategy aimed at poverty reduction, sustainable development and social integration, in particular overcoming social exclusion and discrimination" (United Nations Economic and Social Council 2001:2), and many volunteer organizations sought to align their programming with *the Millennium Development Goals*. Most recently, UNV has put together a plan for the integration of volunteering in the UN peace and development actions in the post-2015 decade around the new *Sustainable Development Goals* (UNV 2015). The new goals are expected to include the "non-negotiable" aspects of "...social development, environmental sustainability and a greater emphasis placed on fostering engagement, and recognizing the assets of local people" (Comhlámh 2013:17).

Today, the main divide in development theory and practice is between human and alternative development, on the one hand, and mainstream development around the "positivism" or centrality of economic growth, on the other (Naderveen Pieterse 2010:107). Accordingly, we can expect that different international volunteer practices will be aligned with one or more of these approaches to development.

¹⁸ Sen further developed the human development approach in his *Development as Freedom* (2001) and Martha Nussbaum built on it in her *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (2011).

INTERSECTIONS OF NEOLIBERALISM(S) AND VOLUNTEERING

Given that the origins of volunteering (both domestic and international) predate the neoliberal turn of the 1970s, the relationship between volunteering and neoliberalism is often framed with the question “How did neoliberalism affect volunteering in general and international volunteering more specifically?” Moreover, the general positive associations with volunteering and negative associations with neoliberalism often translate into research that explains how neoliberalism has co-opted or corrupted volunteer practices. Still there is research validating the duality of volunteering, its capacity to do both good as well as harm, resulting in certain volunteer practices or aspects of those practices that promote and enable neoliberalization, while simultaneously other volunteer practices or aspects of those practices resisting and challenging neoliberalization. In order to disentangle those conflicting interactions I outline specific aspects of volunteering that are aligned with neoliberal and post-neoliberal or counter-neoliberal principles and practices and then move on to discuss why they can coexist.

Mechanisms for Neoliberal Transformation through Volunteering

The main mechanisms for neoliberal transformation through volunteering differ in the degree of volunteer agency and range from creation, enabling, and introduction of neoliberal policies and practices. The last mechanism concerns the process of creation of neoliberal subjects by volunteers including the turning of volunteers into neoliberal subjects.

Creation of neoliberal policies and practices: organizations like the Mont Pelerin Society, which is a civic association with voluntary international membership, had an instrumental role in the conceptualization and promotion of neoliberalism. The Society is still active and continues to hold annual general, regional, and special meetings to further its

neoliberal agenda. Other neoliberal research institutes and think tanks like the American Enterprise Institute, the CATO Institute, the Heritage Foundation, etc. also exemplify these mechanisms of neoliberalization to the extent that these organizations include volunteers on their board of directors.

Enabling the implementation of neoliberal policies and practices: processes of neoliberalization rely on the capacity of the voluntary sector¹⁹ to take on the social responsibilities of the state once those are removed from its domain. Here, volunteers and voluntary organizations enable the implementation of neoliberal policies and practices by functioning as a replacement for the institutions of the welfare state and/or as an extension of the welfare state. This requires the increased responsabilization of individuals and communities for their own social welfare through self-help and mutual cooperation in the case of *welfare privatization* (Clift 2014; Nihei 2010) and the expansion of the role of voluntary organizations in *welfare provision thorough the use of contracts* (Ateş 2002; Chouinard and Crooks 2008).

International volunteering is implicated in these processes in light of the expectation that international volunteers *promote domestic voluntarism and philanthropy*. For example, one of the principles of the 1998 CCIVS Universal Charter of Voluntary Service says: “...international voluntary service, through **encouraging the development of local volunteer programmes**, support local development objectives, provide practical training and education, develop social responsibility, self awareness and self reliance, as the basis for sustainable socio-economic progress” (CCIVS 1998, emphasis mine).

Further, Georgeou and Engel (2011) argues that international development volunteers are key social mediators of neoliberal governance in developing states because they help voluntary

¹⁹ By voluntary sector I mean all non-government and non-for-profit organizations that rely on volunteers to perform their function including secular and faith-based organization.

social service delivery organizations apply for and manage government contracts. When some small and medium scale voluntary organizations are unable to compete for large government contracts they find a survival strategy in serving as sub-contractors to large corporations. In either case - as contractors and sub-contractors - voluntary organizations are required to follow neoliberal forms of governance resulting in the "...colonisation of a part of the voluntary sector by neo-liberal thinking" (Murray 2013:11).

Introducing neoliberal policies and practices: Perhaps, even more importantly, is that under neoliberal governance there is a substantive change in how social services are delivered. The focus shifts from providing material assistance to *individual empowerment projects* that aim to turn needy/dependent clients into self-sufficient individuals by teaching them personal responsibility and how to make wise choices. The mantra is "rather than giving them the fish, we teach them how to fish." In *The Politics of Volunteering* Nina Eliasoph (2013) makes the argument that these individual empowerment projects echo neoliberalism because individuals are seldom given the material means to make those choices (like a fishing rod, to continue the analogy) and because often social service providers *disregard the larger context around the problem* that they are trying to address and thus offer solutions (choices) that create an illusion of empowerment. Teaching someone how to fish is insufficient, when the cost of a fishing rod or a fishing license is prohibitive, when the right to fish is undermined by discriminatory systems or when there is no fish left because of overfishing, etc. In the international context, there is evidence that the introduction of technological solutions without efforts to change existing systems of inequality has created more, not less inequality like the efforts to fight global hunger through the introduction of high-tech seeds without land reforms (Cullather 2010; Lappe et al. 1998 and George 1986 in Eliasoph 2013:124-125).

Eliasoph (2013) also argues that there is a tendency of empowerment projects to avoid political activism due to the competitive short-term contractor/donor cycle. The cycle is not well suited to address complex political controversies, not to mention that political activism may be a dangerous endeavor for a voluntary organization that relies on government grants for its survival. Moreover, it promotes a culture of “cherry-picking” where organizations feel pressured to avoid helping the neediest and focus instead on the people who might already be on their way up. Internationally, donors choose to work with groups/communities that are more skilled in framing their problems in ways that appeal to them but that are not necessarily in most need of help. In either case, the process *puts individuals and communities in direct competition* for assistance and encourages self-interest rather than cooperation and solidarity. International development volunteering also tends to be de-politicized and results in volunteers who care about global environmental and social justice agendas but are unable to support the structural-political change that is necessary to solve the same global environmental and social problems that they care about (Fechter and Hindman 2011; Mostafanezhad 2012)

Creating neoliberal subjects: The ultimate result of neoliberal governance, however, is that it turns people into “new political subjectivities” (Can 2013). This includes both the subjects (customers) as well as the objects (agents) of neoliberal governance practices. Volunteers can be both. On the one hand, as volunteers, they are subject to certain volunteer recruitment, training, and support policies: they are the customers. On the other hand, when as volunteers they are involved in efforts to assist other people: they are the development agents. *Short-term, one-directional international volunteering from the Global North to the Global South* by young people through gap year programs and volunteer tourism programs is especially well suited to turn volunteers into neoliberal subjects (Lyons et al. 2012; Mostafanezhad 2014; Vrasti 2012).

This is the case when the focus of volunteer recruitment is on the instrumental rather than on altruistic reasons to volunteer. For example, recruiters “sell” volunteering as time that young volunteers can trade for gaining international experience that will in turn improve their employability and ease their transition to work; instead of a commitment to mutual aid and understanding (Dean 2014). Instrumental motivations to meet employers’ expectations is problematic because it changes the nature of volunteering from an act of free-will and an expression of one’s commitment to certain social values to an obligatory activity, that is enforced economically and socially rather than legally. We end up with a society where “ [y]oung people came forward to plant trees and clear canals, not because they wanted to plant trees and clear canals, but because they wanted to say they had planted trees and cleared canals” (Dean 2014:15). In the long-run, the concern is that this type of volunteering without loyalties will pose a threat to the sustainability of voluntary organizations as it will be more difficult to recruit and retain volunteers.

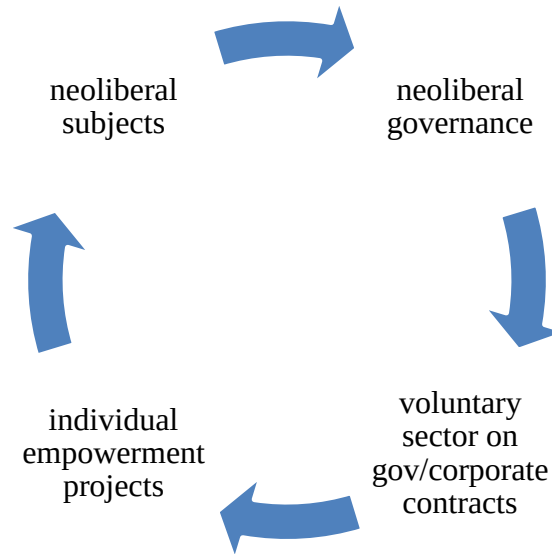
Another mechanism through which international volunteering expands the neoliberal agenda is by *maintaining knowledge production and representation that support status and power differentials* between the volunteers and their host communities (Lewis 2006). Volunteer programs are often available to privileged individuals who can afford to participate in the programs and/or who meet certain education criteria. The North-South and West-East direction of programs further reinforces paternalistic relationships reminiscent of colonialism and simplistic binaries of “us” versus “them” (Grusky 2000; Perold et al. 2006) as well as when the development approach is based on skills transfer (which reinforces a sense of inherent superiority) rather than mutual learning (Rockliffe 2005). Then a focus on sentimentality often reframes questions of structural inequalities as questions of individual morality (Mostafanezhad

2014). Evidence from a quasi-experimental study on the impact of international volunteering on the volunteers confirms that international service does not have an impact on volunteers' perceived intercultural relations (that it doesn't challenge notions of Western privilege and power) but that it has a positive impact on the volunteers' perceived international awareness, international social capital, and international career intentions (McBride 2010:8).

Lastly, *the professionalization and commodification of international volunteering* itself exemplifies processes of neoliberalization: the alignment of individual conduct with neoliberal capital's double injunction of market rationality and social responsibility (-). From this perspective it doesn't matter whether international volunteering delivers on its promise for multicultural understanding because its true function is to produce the subjects and social relations that neoliberalism requires.

With neoliberalization, there is a possibility of a "vicious" cycle to emerge where neoliberal governance co-opts parts of the voluntary sector by contracting it to deliver social services (individual empowerment projects) that create neoliberal subjects who in turn support neoliberal governance as shown in Figure 1. The legitimacy of the service delivery voluntary sector acting as proxy for the government is undermined, which can in turn question the legitimacy of the whole voluntary sector, including its political activism segments (civic participation and advocacy and campaigning) which have the capacity to challenge neoliberal practices.

Figure 1: Diagram of the Cycle of Neoliberal Cooptation of Volunteering



Mechanisms for Counter-Neoliberal Transformation through Volunteering

The mechanisms for counter-neoliberal transformation through volunteering also involve different degrees of volunteer agency. Those include resisting processes of neoliberalization, introducing counter-neoliberal practices, as well as the imagining and creation of post-neoliberal futures inhabited by critical global citizens

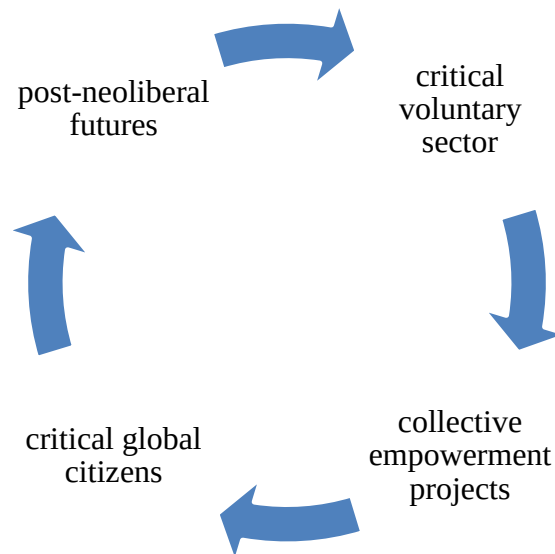
Resisting neoliberalization: The UNV program reports that volunteers have been instrumental in energizing movements at global, national, and local levels to increase the accountability of non-state actors on a variety of issues. Anti-neoliberal/anti-globalization protests that engage in *critiques of neoliberal policies and practices* are examples of such resistance (i.e. the battle of Seattle, the Occupy movement, etc.). In order for volunteer organizations to resist neoliberalization, they have to become critical partners of the state, which requires that service delivery organizations embrace political activism (Eliasoph 2013).

Introducing counter-neoliberal practices: The neoliberal values of self-interest and competition undermine systems of solidarity. One solution is for voluntary organizations to focus on *equalizing power dynamics* between nations and organizations (McBride 2005). Here, there is evidence that international volunteering has been successful in mobilizing local volunteers to campaign for legislative changes of discriminatory laws at the national level; to prevent violence against women; to ensure the right to information; and to change relevant global policies and standards by scrutinizing labor practices (UNV 2015). Another mechanism for counter-neoliberalization is the promotion of *collective social empowerment* and social inclusion by opening up civic participation in all sectors of society including in their own practices (i.e. consensus-decision making and leaderless groups, participatory democracy forums, participatory city budgets, promoting fair-trade) (Eliasoph 2013).

Creation of critical global citizens: When international volunteerism produces neoliberal subjects it undermines the goals of the counter-neoliberal movement. Such practices perpetuate systems of hierarchies that prevent global solidarity. However, it is possible that international volunteerism is organized in ways that produce *critical global citizens* and thus supports the goals for global social and environmental justice (GVC et al. n.d.). Volunteer-involving organizations can foster reciprocal exchanges, while participants in one-directional North-South and East-West volunteering can be challenged to replace ideas about cultural sensitivity with cultural critique of the modern world system (Handler 2015). The hope is that counter-neoliberal volunteering can engender a virtuous cycle of its own where a voluntary sector engaged in political (social) activism promotes collective empowerment projects that create critical global citizens who in turn support transformations towards post-neoliberal futures as shown in Figure 2. Here, the voluntary sector gains back its legitimacy as a corrective to the

state and the market and works towards a new global order at the local, national, and international level based on the principles of social and environmental justice.

Figure 2 Diagram of the Cycle of Counter-Neoliberal of Volunteering



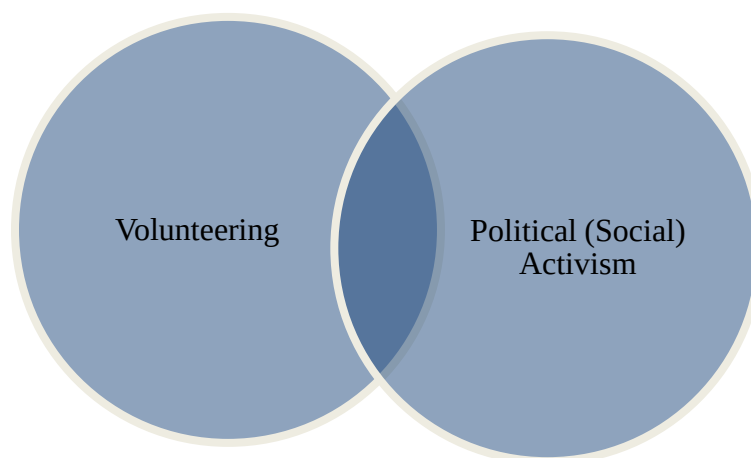
The Dialectic of Volunteering

While these distinctions between mechanisms for neoliberalization and counter-neoliberalization can be made conceptually, in reality these mechanisms coexist at the individual and organizational levels because of the duality of volunteering. The latter concerns two related but different issues: 1) volunteer motivations and 2) the purpose of volunteering. *Volunteer motivations* involves whether people become volunteers for altruistic or instrumental reasons. Sharing of the core values of volunteering – solidarity, justice, inclusion, and citizenship – aligns with altruistic motivations, whereas a desire to volunteer in order to gain skills and competencies exemplify instrumental or self-serving motivations (Halba 2014). Altruistic motivations in turn are associated with counter-neoliberalization while instrumental motivations with

neoliberalization. Both altruism and self-service often motivate people, so the question is how those motivations balance each other.

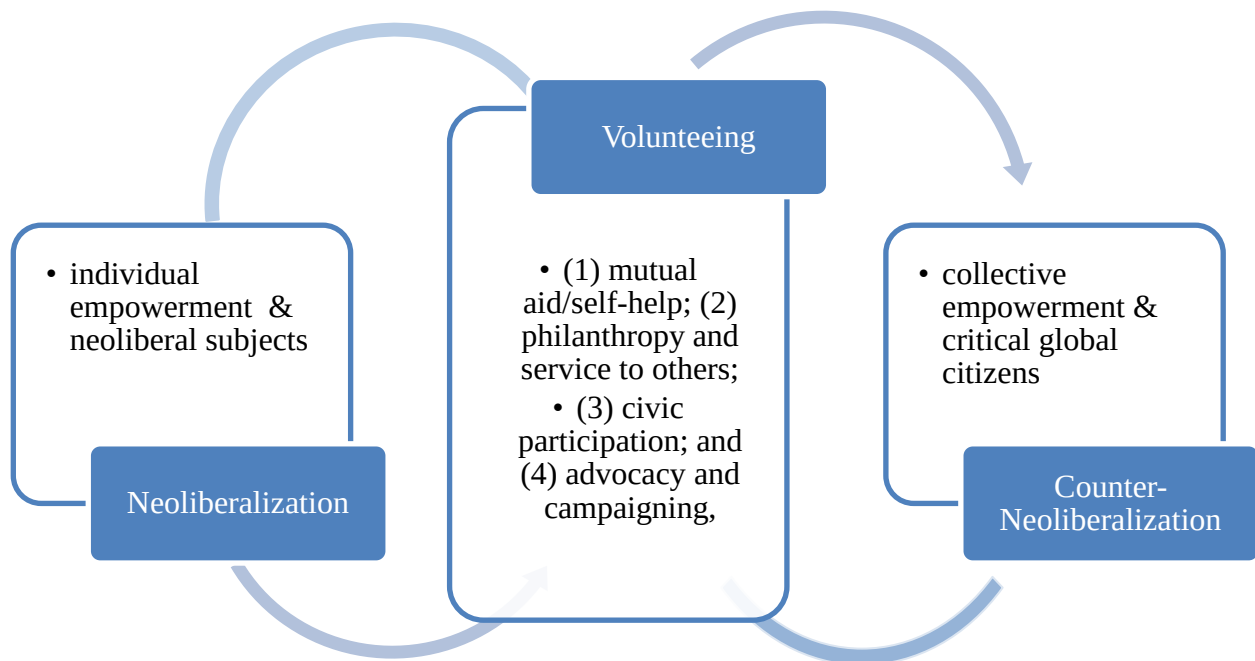
The second issue is whether both *volunteering* and *political (social) activism* are mutually exclusive. The UNV definition of volunteering includes four types of volunteering: (1) mutual aid/self-help; (2) philanthropy and service to others; (3) civic participation; and (4) advocacy and campaigning, two of which directly relate to political activism (3 and 4). Volunteering and political activism converge and overlap around creating opportunities for participation and advocacy campaigns to change existing systems of governance (UNV 2015: 4). However, not all political activists are volunteers. Then, there is evidence that volunteering for mutual aid/self-help and especially volunteering that supports service delivery is often disconnected from any political action and thus sits outside of the realm of political activism (Eliasoph 2013). In Figure 3, I illustrate how while the two types are not mutually exclusive, they are also not the same.

Figure 3: Diagram of the Duality of Volunteering



When volunteering and political activism overlap, there are opportunities for volunteers to act as active promoters, unwilling supporters, or opponents of neoliberalism. Therefore, the cycles of neoliberalization and counter-neoliberalization through volunteering should be thought of as mutually constitutive or dialectic rather than as opposing or separate processes as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Diagram of the Dialectic of Volunteering



Modes towards Post-Neoliberal Futures

According to Wright (2010) there are three possible modes of social transformation towards a post-neoliberal future:

1. *Ruptural transformations*: creating new forms of social empowerment by a sharp break with existing forms and social structures (sharp discontinuity and rapid change);

2. *Interstitial transformations*: creating new forms of social empowerment in the niches, spaces, and margins of capitalist society, where they do not pose an immediate threat to dominant classes and elites;
3. *Symbiotic transformations*: creating new hybrid forms of social empowerment that serve the interests of the dominant classes and elites in the short term, while shifting the balance of power towards broader social empowerment in the long-term.

Volunteering can support all three modes of social transformation. Volunteers can be active participants in revolutions (ruptural transformations) and they can create new forms of social empowerment such as community-based social economy services (interstitial transformation). However, given the high degree of formality and the reliance of international volunteer development programs on government, private, and corporate funding they are best equipped to engage in collaborative problem solving (symbiotic transformations). In the short-term, receiving funds from the dominant classes and elites requires an alignment of the programs with their interests, especially government funded programs, which are often considered as soft instruments of power (Rieffel 2005). When international volunteer development programs are designed to support the creation of critical global citizens they work towards broader social empowerment in the long-term.

LIMITATIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK

By creating a conceptual framework that examines the intersection between neoliberalisms and international development volunteering, I risk embedding the dominance of neoliberalism in the academic discourse. By accounting for the diversity of responses to neoliberal ideology, policy, and governance in my discussion on mechanisms for counter-

neoliberal transformation, I have attempted to move beyond the centrality of neoliberalism as an explanation of social change (Tomczhak 2013). Still, a truly dialectical framework should account for the simultaneous integration of “social” elements into market structures as well as how a socialist form of governmentality could take shape in the world of business and commerce. Further my dissertation aims to create comparisons without reproducing power structures by contrasting conceptual models to reality: relationality.

There is also a danger in assuming that all apolitical voluntary social service provisions are the result of neoliberal policy/governance. In Nicaragua for example, female-led voluntary systems existed long before neoliberalism and are embedded in highly familist social policy regimes (Franzoni and Voorend 2011). In the US, the focus on results-based management exemplified by the project culture of today’s NGOs can be traced back at least to the progressive era when progressives “...targeted corrupt and inefficient city governments” (Krause 2014:78). That is why it is important that the study of international development volunteering accounts for the specific context within which it is occurring.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I presented the conceptual framework for my analysis of international development volunteer models by creating a typology of volunteer practices based on the identification of mechanisms through which volunteering can support articulations and contestations of neoliberalism. I examined three intertwined articulations of neoliberalism as a policy package, ideology, and a mode of governance, each of which emanate from different theoretical perspectives. The development or applied perspective focuses on a set of neoliberal policies that present themselves as anti-state but require a strong authoritarian state that is

capable of disregarding public discontent accompanying the implementation of such policies. The critical theory perspective explains the ascendance of neoliberal policies as the dominant development paradigm in political/class terms including how they have facilitated economic globalization benefiting the economic elite while contributing to growing inequalities between and within countries. The post-structuralist perspective explains the neoliberal turn as a process of reconfiguration of the social reality inhabited by people with new mentalities (subjectivities) through the expansion of the rationality of the market from the economic to non-economic domains of society. In this process neoliberalism transforms from an economic policy to governmentality (new modes of governance for new political subjects). Since neoliberalisms function as hybrids that exist in a kind of parasitic relation to the social formations that host them, contestations of neoliberalism cannot be wholly distinct from neoliberalism. Alternatives to neoliberalism thus seek to create new forms of redistributive politics including by de-emphasizing the centrality of economic growth as the measure of human well-being and by deepening democracy through active citizenship.

The interest in the study of volunteering has grown along with the increased recognition of the importance of volunteering for domestic and international development. Historically, the meaning of development in international volunteering has changed along with shifts in the dominant development perspectives and now reflects the divide between human and alternative development, on the one hand, and growth-driven development on the other. The main mechanisms for neoliberal transformation through volunteering include the creation, enabling, and introduction of neoliberal policies and practices by volunteers and/voluntary organizations including participation in short-term one-directional professionalized and commoditized international volunteer development opportunities. These create a possibility of a “vicious”

cycle to emerge where parts of the voluntary sector are co-opted into the neoliberal regime by contracting it to deliver social services (individual empowerment projects) that create neoliberal subjects who in turn support neoliberal governance.

In contrast, the mechanisms for counter-neoliberal transformation through volunteering include resisting processes of neoliberalization, introducing counter-neoliberal practices, as well as the imagining and creation of post-neoliberal futures, including through participation in reflexive reciprocal international volunteer opportunities. The hope is that counter-neoliberal volunteering can engender a virtuous cycle of its own where a voluntary sector engaged in political (social) activism promotes collective empowerment projects that create critical global citizens. In Table 3, I summarize the main mechanisms for neoliberalization and counter-neoliberalization through volunteering along three main themes: values, practices, and subjectivity. Contrary to the format of the table, these mechanisms should not be thought of as dichotomous but rather as mechanisms that interpenetrate each other.

In the limitations of the framework I discuss the importance of grounding studies of international development volunteering practices in the specific contexts within which they are occurring. In the next chapter I move to discuss the historical and organizational contexts of my case study. I start with the larger Eastern European post-socialist context, then the specific Bulgarian and Peace Corps contexts.

Table 3: Mechanisms for Neoliberalization and Counter-Neoliberalization through Volunteering

Theme	<i>Neoliberal volunteering:</i>	<i>Counter-neoliberal volunteering:</i>
Values/Goals	• Self-interest (self-sufficiency) and competition • Inequality/Economic Growth (neoliberal development)	• Solidarity (mutuality) and cooperation; • Social and environmental justice/equity (alternative development).
Practices	Creates, enables, and implements neoliberal policies and practices: • Works to establish domestic voluntary sectors that focus on social service delivery including volunteering that replaces state social service provision • Works to establish domestic voluntary sectors that serve as an extension of the government/private sectors • Focus on individual empowerment projects • Supports power differentials: hierarchical management/decision-making	Creates, promotes, and implements counter-neoliberal policies and practices: • Works to promote political activism including volunteering that expands political, economic, and social rights (human rights) and environmentalism; • Works to establish domestic voluntary sectors that act as a critical partner of the state. • Focus on collective social empowerment projects • Supports equalizing power dynamics: democratic management/decision-making
Subjectivity	Creates neoliberal subjects: • Cultural supremacists • Short-term and narrow view of development • One-way interaction: volunteers as object of development (skill-transfer); north-south and west-east volunteering • Simplistic/paternalistic perception of the world	Creates critical global citizens: • Cultural relativists • Long-term and complex view of development • two-way interaction: volunteers are both objects and subjects of development; reciprocal exchanges/ multidirectional volunteering • Complex understanding of world interdependence

CHAPTER 3: CONTEXTUALIZING THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION

This chapter contextualizes the conceptual framework for the study. I begin with the larger regional context where I first outline changes in the goals of the transition: from the challenges of dual transition (democracy and economy building) to the challenge of transitioning to complex interdependence including EU integration. I conclude the regional context with a discussion on the research on international development volunteering in the region. In the second part I move to the specifics of the Bulgarian transition including separate discussion on the main sources of official foreign assistance and research on volunteering in the country. I finish with a discussion of the Peace Corps organizational context where I analyze the explicit and implicit goals of the organization and summarize the key points from the debate about Peace Corps entry into Eastern Europe.

THE REGIONAL POST-SOCIALIST CONTEXT

The Challenge of Dual Transition

The first generation of scholarship on post-socialism(s) was articulated as the challenge of dual *transition*, which involved the simultaneous building of a liberal democracy and a market economy (capitalism). Much of the initial uncertainty and debate centered on whether intensive and prolonged economic reforms would result in the rejection of democracy or if citizens would use their new democratic rights to put an end to economic reforms (Aslund 2007; Burawoy and Verdery eds. 1999). Some post-socialist states that gained independence after 1989, or were otherwise politically reconstituted, faced a triple transition: simultaneous democratization,

marketization, and state building. Elster et al. (1998) have used the metaphor of “building a ship while at sea” to describe the enormity of the task at hand. The ship is the new system, and the sea is the global context within which the post-socialist transitions were about to envelop. The process of institutional consolidation unfolded more or less in the following timeframe:

- 1989 – 1992: focus on constitution making and building of democratic infrastructure (changes in the electoral and party systems);
- 1992 – 1996: focus on economic reforms (privatization/restitution and marketization);
- 1997 and after: focus on reforms in social policy (Elster, Offe and Praus 1998).

The range of progress among the different countries on the political and economic dimensions, presented itself as “varieties of transition” (Offe 1997) leading to “varieties of capitalisms” (Drahokoupil 2009).

When the progress in the consolidation of democracy is assessed, the ranking of the Freedom House are often referenced (Graham 2006). This ranking incorporates seven separate democracy dimensions: electoral process, civil society, independent media, national democratic governance, local democratic governance, judicial framework and independence, and corruption. Table 4 includes data from the latest 2015 report according to which of the 29 countries assessed for 2014, 13 were rated as democracies (seven as consolidated democracies and six as semi-consolidated democracies), six as transitional regimes, and 12 as authoritarian regimes (including two as semi-consolidated authoritarian regimes). A key finding of the report is that: “[a]s in each of the previous 10 years, the average democracy score declined in 2014, with 12 countries suffering downgrades” (Freedom House 2015). The latter underscores the uncertainty of transition with democratization unfolding as an uneven rather than unilinear process. Most recently, Obydenkova and Libman (2015) argue that the regime transition in post-Soviet Eurasia

has had a double nature, where it was not only democracy-reinforcing (as had been traditionally determined) but also autocracy-reinforcing.

Table 4: 2015 Democracy Scores and Regime Ratings for Post-socialist Countries

Regime Type	Country	Score
Consolidated Democracy	Slovenia	1.93
	Estonia	1.96
	Latvia	2.07
	Poland	2.21
	Czech Republic	2.21
	Lithuania	2.36
	Slovakia	2.64
Semi-Consolidated Democracy	Hungary	3.18
	Bulgaria	3.29
	Romania	3.46
	Croatia	3.68
	Serbia	3.68
	Montenegro	3.89
Transitional Government or Hybrid Regime	Macedonia	4.07
	Albania	4.14
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	4.46
	Georgia	4.64
	Ukraine	4.75
	Moldova	4.86
Semi-Consolidated Authoritarian Regime	Armenia	5.36
	Kyrgyzstan	5.93
Consolidated Authoritarian Regime	Kosovo (province)	5.14
	Tajikistan	6.39
	Russia	6.46
	Kazakhstan	6.61
	Belarus	6.71
	Azerbaijan	6.75
	Turkmenistan	6.93
	Uzbekistan	6.93

Source: Freedom House 2015 Nations in Transit Report.

Key: The democracy scores and regime ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The 2015 ratings reflect the period January 1 through December 31, 2014. The democracy score itself is the average of 7 separate democracy dimensions: electoral process, civil society, independent media, national democratic governance, local democratic governance, judicial framework and independence, and corruption.

The strategies for establishment of market economies fell into two paths – radical or Shock Therapy reforms exemplified by Poland versus gradual reforms exemplified by Hungary – which were at the center of the debates in the first years. Shock Therapy refers to the set of neoliberal policies that economists Jeffrey Sachs and David Lipton advised be implemented as the best strategy of transition to a market economy. Specifically, they called for the quick and simultaneous implementations of stabilization, liberalization, and privatization reforms that would shock and destroy what remained from the old communist system, and enable the spontaneous creation of the new market system (Burawoy and Verdery eds.1999; Bockman 2011). This approach is very similar in its logic to the one-size-fits-all approach of the Washington Consensus reforms but “it went further and was more specific” (Aslund 2007:32). This radical vision for market economic reforms in Eastern Europe was supported by a powerful coalition including leading mainstream Western (primarily American) macroeconomists, the “best” economists in the East, local politicians with economic insight, international financial institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, and the major Western governments (Aslund 2007:31). The local support for radical reforms, especially where the intellectual vanguard is concerned, is explained with their insistence on the rituals of purification, sacrifice, and confession during the process of transition (Eyal et al. 1998:181). In Shock Therapy they saw not only the means of rescuing the economy but also a way to transform the people’s consciousness and erase the idea of communism.

Neoliberalism, understood as Shock Therapy, stood in stark contrast to more gradual approaches that sought to build the new market economy from within, similarly to the evolutionary transition of China (Poznansky 1993; Goldman 1994; Kornaj 1990; Stiglitz 1994). The arguments in support for gradualism were based in social democratic political economy, the

concept of disorganization, and evolutionary or institutional economics and expressed a concern that the cost of implementing Shock Therapy would be too high and might jeopardize the other goal of transition, establishing a democracy, while destabilizing an already fragile system which would only complicate economic decision-making. In the end, few countries embarked on Shock Therapy reforms.²⁰ Nevertheless, neoliberal policies or “radical market economic reforms with deregulation, macroeconomic stabilization, privatization, and the formation of a new social safety net” were implemented to a reasonable degree in all countries except Belarus, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, which remain largely unreformed (Aslund 2007). Ultimately, the adoption of IMF-style policies required agreement of both the post-socialist governments and the IMF about the roots and severity of an economic crisis (Pop-Eleches 2009). Only recently has the common sense that neoliberalism triumphed in Eastern Europe been questioned (Ganev 2005).

Like the processes of democratization, there is no uniformity in the consequences of economic reforms²¹ among either the Shock Therapy or the non-Shock Therapy countries except that all experienced significant and longer than expected recessions (hyperinflations) at the beginning of their transitions (Stiglitz 2002:151). In the early years economic performance was disastrous and the post-socialist countries experienced deep recessions, although neoliberals argue that much of it was a “statistical illusion” (Aslund 2007:308). After ten years, the transition process appeared to have steered away from the prescribed neoliberal logic. Multiple post-socialist trajectories had emerged and the outcomes of transition were not uniform. Scholars

²⁰ Poland implemented shock-therapy reforms first in 1990, followed by Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria in 1991, Russia, Albania, and Estonia in 1992, and Latvia in 1993 (Marangos in Bockman 2011:191)

²¹ Related to the lack of uniformity in consequences is that there is no uniformity in the data measures that are used for the assessments of the success of transitions to a market economy (or capitalism): GDP recovery from the 1989 levels (Kalb 2002), data on economic growth, income distribution, poverty and integration into the global economy (Graham 2006), data on economic growth, inflation, unemployment rate and the EBRD structural reform index (Aslund 2012).

began to distinguish countries and group them in clusters according to their level of institutional consolidation (Elster et al. 1998), the stability of their polities (Bunce 1999), or how well they have recovered from the “transitional recession” (Kalb 2002).

The countries in Central Europe – Poland, Hungary, the Czech and the Slovak Republics – appeared to be on the lead, while the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries were falling behind. But with existence of unprecedented levels of poverty and inequality throughout the region, some argued that “...anyone who speaks about ‘the success of transition in Central and Eastern Europe’ is either a cynic or unable to look beyond macro issues of institutional design” (Kalb 2002:327). After twenty years, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) reported that over the last decade the recovery of countries in transition was accompanied by jobless growth and that “...inequalities continue to widen, especially between central and peripheral regions” (2012:i). Neoliberals explained away the remarkably diverse outcomes with exogenous factors. It was the pace of reforms: “[s]lower reforms caused greater and more long-lasting output decline, higher inflation, greater income differentials, more corruptions, and less democracy” (Aslund 2007:308) or because of deviations from the planned reforms as in the case of Russia (Sachs 2005:136). Poland, where Shock Therapy was first introduced is typically considered the poster child of neoliberal success. However, in reality the Polish success story is due rather to the special treatment it received - including debt cancellation – in order to make it the poster child of transition (Kalb 2000).

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) transition indicators attempt to measure specifically the amount of progress from a rigid centrally planned economy to an industrialized market economy by focusing on measures of privatization, liberalization, and governance. Table 5 shows the EBRD ranking of post-socialist countries into three groups in

terms of their distance (or transition gap) to an industrialized market economy: (1) countries with small gaps; (2) countries with medium gaps; and (3) countries with large gaps. None of the countries fall in the “negligible transition gap” category. This categorization does not align with the democracy rankings, except that all consolidated democracies are in the small transition gap group, whereas all countries with large transition gaps are consolidated authoritarian regimes.

Table 5: 2014 Transition Indicators for Post-socialist Countries

Transition Gaps	Transition Score	Enterprises			Markets and Trade			Regime Type
		LSP	SSP	EER	PL	TFEX	CP	
Negligible (4+)								
Small (3+ to 4)								
Estonia	4.06	4	4.33	3.67	4.33	4.33	3.67	CD
Poland	4.00	3.67	4.33	3.67	4.33	4.33	3.67	CD
Latvia	3.94	3.67	4.33	3.33	4.33	4.33	3.67	CD
Lithuania	3.94	4	4.33	3	4.33	4.33	3.67	CD
Slovakia	3.94	4	4.33	3.67	4.33	4	3.33	CD
Hungary	3.89	4	4.33	3.67	4	4	3.33	SCD
Croatia	3.83	3.67	4.33	3.33	4	4.33	3.33	SCD
Bulgaria	3.72	4	4	2.67	4.33	4.33	3	SCD
Slovenia	3.56	3	4.33	3	4	4.33	2.67	CD
Macedonia	3.56	3.33	4	2.67	4.33	4.33	2.67	TG/HR
Romania	3.50	3.67	3.67	2.67	4.33	4.33	2.33	SCD
Kyrgyzstan	3.50	3.67	4	2	4.33	4.33	2.67	SCAR
Albania	3.50	3.67	4	2.33	4.33	4.33	2.33	TG/HR
Georgia	3.50	4	4	2.33	4.33	4.33	2	TG/HR
Armenia	3.44	3.67	4	2.33	4	4.33	2.33	SCAR
Medium (2+ to 3+)								
Montenegro	3.33	3.33	3.67	2.33	4	4.33	2.33	SCD
Russia	3.28	3	4	2.33	4	3.67	2.67	CAR
Ukraine	3.28	3	4	2.33	4	4	2.33	TG/HR
Moldova	3.28	3	4	2	4	4.33	2.33	TG/HR
Serbia	3.17	2.67	3.67	2.33	4	4	2.33	SCD
Kazakhstan	3.06	3	4	2	3.67	3.67	2	CAR
Bosnia & Herzegovina	3.06	3	3	2	4	4	2.33	TG/HR

Table 5 (cont'd)

Tajikistan	2.95	2.33	4	2	4	3.67	1.67	CAR
Azerbaijan	2.89	2	3.67	2	4	4	1.67	CAR
Kosovo (province)	2.89	1.67	3.33	2	4	4	2.33	CAR
Large (1 to 2+)								
Uzbekistan	2.28	2.67	3.33	1.67	2.67	1.67	1.67	CAR
Belarus	2.17	1.67	2.33	1.67	3	2.33	2	CAR
Turkmenistan	1.78	1	2.33	1	3	2.33	1	CAR
No data								
Czech Republic								CD

Source: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. 2014. *Transition Report*. Retrieved October 29, 2015 (<http://2014.tr-ebrd.com/category/reforms/>).

Key: LSP=Large-Scale Privatization; SSP=Small-Scale Privatization; GEP=Governance & Enterprise Restructuring; PL=Price Liberalization; TFES=Trade & Foreign Exchange System; CP=Competition Policy

Note: The transition score and indicators range from 1 to 4+, with 1 representing little or no change relative to a rigid centrally planned economy and 4+ representing the standards of an industrialized market economy. “+” and “-” ratings are treated by adding 0.33 and subtracting 0.33 from the full value. Averages are obtained by rounding down, for example, a score of 2.6 is treated as 2+, but a score of 2.8 is treated as 3-.

Macro-level critical analyses of the processes of transition in Eastern Europe attribute the sharp differences to path dependency or how stable the economic and political regimes were at the beginning of transition (Bunce 1999), and the institutional and individual capacities of states and their leaders to adapt to the new circumstance (Elster et al. 1998; Hann 2006; Mandell and Humphrey 2002; Juchler 2002; Stark and Burst 1998). Ethnographic analyses, with a focus on how new structures are constituted from below, find the answer in the micro responses to macro policies: “...in the ways people and their communities absorb, manipulate, or reject the new market parameters of action” (Burawoy and Verdery eds. 1999:15). Perhaps more importantly, they find that it is difficult to measure the success of transition either one way or the other, because the evidence suggests that the shift to a market economy brings with it “regressive” and “progressive” dynamics simultaneously.

From Dual to Quadruple Transition

Some post-socialist states that gained independence after 1989, or were otherwise politically reconstituted such as the Baltic States and the successor states of Yugoslavia, faced a *triple transition*: simultaneous democratization, economic liberalization, and state building. Ganev (2007) argues that all post-socialist countries experienced the third challenge of state building understood as “reconfiguration of state structures” and that “...reformist strategies that assume functional state structures are just as utopian as the naïve neoliberal assumption that market institutions emerge spontaneously once state regulations are relaxed” (2007:195). Collier (2012) who conceptualized neoliberalism as a form of critical reflection on government practice posits that neoliberalism arises in response of the problems of the social state, which could be the Soviet social state, the welfare state, and state-led development. As a style of economic reasoning, neoliberalism then is less concerned about freeing markets than about rethinking government. In this sense, both economic and state structure reforms can be pursued in a neoliberal fashion. Some scholars (Tickle and Peck 2003 in Peck 2010) have conceptualized the difference as roll-back neoliberalism (the destructive deregulation of the market) and roll-out neoliberalism (the creative and proactive institution building in service of neoliberal goals).

Orenstein et al. (2008) argue that a fourth neglected component of the transition - the *role of transnational actors* - was responsible to a large extent for the limited amount of disruption and disjunction that accompanied the transition process, especially in Central Europe. The argument is that transnational actors acted as the "dark matter" that held the various aspects of the transition together. Among the variety of actors - international governmental and nongovernmental organizations, corporations, banks, foundations, religious groups, and activist networks - the EU is posited as the most visible and powerful transnational actor in the region

(Vachudova 2008). Indeed, as shown in Table 6, of the 29 post-socialist countries all have been included in EU enlargement or cooperation policies.

EU Membership functions as a strategy for the accomplishment of both the political and economic goals of transition given that the key criteria for accession (the Copenhagen criteria of 1993) include: “(1) stable institutions guaranteeing **democracy**, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities, (2) **a functioning market economy** and the capacity to cope with competition and market forces in the EU, and (3) the ability to take on and implement effectively the obligations of membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.”²² Therefore, countries that took the path to become EU members often have substituted the rhetoric about the dual goals of transition with the goal of European integration.

Within the EU there is a variety of “actually existing neoliberalisms” (Brenner and Theodore eds. 2002), and countries that elected to pursue membership in the EU experienced neoliberalization in the process of European integration, especially those entering the European Monetary Union (Millios and Toporowski in Saad-Filho and Johnston 2005). Neoliberalization as EU integration is accomplished through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance the purpose of which was to “...build up the capacities of the countries throughout the accession process, resulting in progressive, positive developments in the region”²³, as well as the implementation and enforcement of all EU rules (the 35 different policy chapters or “acquis”). Non-EU accession countries have been assisted in the adoption, implementation, and enforcement of EU rules through aid programs and EU cooperation policies.

²² Source: European Commission. 2015. “Accession Criteria.” Retrieved October 29, 2015 (http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/accession-criteria_en.htm).

²³ Source: European Commission. 2015. “Overview - Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance.” Retrieved October 29, 2015 (http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/instruments/overview/index_en.htm).

Table 6: EU Enlargement and Cooperation Policy towards Post-socialist Countries

EU Status	Country	Agreement	Year in Force
Member	Bulgaria	AT	2007
	Croatia	AT	2013
	Czech Republic	AT	2004
	Estonia	AT	2004
	Hungary	AT	2004
	Latvia	AT	2004
	Lithuania	AT	2004
	Poland	AT	2004
	Romania	AT	2007
	Slovakia	AT	2004
	Slovenia	AT	2004
Candidate	Albania (as of 2010)	SAA	2009
	Macedonia (as of 2005)	SAA	2001
	Montenegro (as of 2010)	SAA	2010
	Serbia (as of 2012)	SAA	2013
Potential Candidate	Bosnia and Herzegovina	SAA	2008
	Kosovo (province)	SAA	2012
ENP (2003)	Moldova	AA	1998
	Ukraine	AA	1998
	Armenia	PCA	1999
	Azerbaijan	PCA	1999
	Georgia	AA	1999
	Belarus	PCA	(1995)
EU-CAS (2007)	Kazakhstan	PCA	1999
	Kyrgyzstan	PCA	1999
	Uzbekistan	PCA	1999
	Tajikistan	PCA	2010
	Turkmenistan	PCA	pending
Cross Border Cooperation	Russia	PCA	1997

Source: European Commission. 2015. "European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations." Retrieved October 29, 2015 (http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index_en.htm).

Key: AA (Association Agreement), AT (Accession Treaty); ENP (European Neighborhood Policy), EU-CAS (EU-Central Asia Strategy), PCA (Partnership and Cooperation Agreement), SAA (Stabilisation and Association Agreement).

Most recently Appel and Orenstein argue that "...Eastern European and Eurasian countries often pursued even more radical neoliberal reforms than the EU advised, including such avant-garde neoliberal reforms as the flat tax, pension privatization, slashing corporate tax

rates, extreme monetarism, and central bank independence” (2015:4). In their view the sustained adoption of extreme neoliberal reforms in the region was pursued as a “signal to attract capital” in the context of international economic integration and the need to compete with other developing countries that had liberalized a decade before 1989.

International Development Volunteering in the Region

In the context of Eastern European post-socialist transformations, there has been significant research on the nonprofit or civil society sector in relation to processes of democratization (Fagan 2010:2012; Glasius et al 2004; Gordon and Dunst 2004; Hann 2002; Hann 2006; Howard 2003; Meier-Dallach, et al. 2002; Torsello 2012; Uhlin 2006) and some research on the relationships of aid to Eastern Europe and the power dynamics between donors, aid agencies, local aid contractors, and the recipients of aid (Atlani-Duault 2007; Lankina and Getachew 2006, 2007; Mandel 2012; Orenstein et al. 2008; Wedel 1998). But the research on volunteering and especially on the role of international volunteering is very limited.²⁴ A 2010 study by the UNV program on *Understanding Volunteerism for Development in South-Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States: Lessons for Expansion* identifies International VIOs (Volunteer Involving Organizations) as one of the key volunteerism stakeholders in the region.²⁵ It acknowledges IVIOs role in initiating or helping to conceive new VIOs, bringing a different perspective on the situation in the country, helping in raising the self-esteem of local volunteers and involving local volunteers in their work, funding the activities of

²⁴ In general, data on international development volunteering is based largely on studies of Western/Global North volunteer programs to the Global South (Powell 2015: xxiv).

²⁵ The report mentions specifically Peace Corps, Mercy Corps, The Roma-Gadje Dialogue (RGDTS), Aga Khan Development Network, Greenpeace, Red Cross / Red Crescent, Rotary International, Service Civil International (SCI), United Nations Volunteers (UNV), Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), and YMCA (Powell 2010).

local IVOs, and introducing new technologies or new ways of working. The overall assessment is that:

Although some stakeholders in the region may see Peace Corps and other volunteering agencies as enforcing the foreign policy of the West, rather than supporting them to reach the MDGs, the fresh perspective many international volunteers bring offers a community with **unique cross-cultural exchange and learning opportunities**. (Powell 2010:68, emphasis mine)

Cross-cultural exchanges were not a novelty for post-socialist countries. In fact, volunteer youth exchanges between the East and the West began as early the 1970s and 1980s in the format of summer youth work camps and were also popular among countries of the communist bloc (CCIJS 2015; Powell 2010: 36). In addition to international volunteer organizations, many of the post-socialist countries gained access to the “Youth in Action” programs of the European Commission (now Erasmus+) including the “Youth Exchanges” and “European Voluntary Service” (EVS) actions. These actions promoted cross-border mobility for youth aged 13 to 30 from EU member state and EU partner countries.²⁶ Youth exchanges are short-term (five to 21 days) and “...enable young people **to discover new cultures and friends**, develop new competences, and better appreciate values like solidarity and democracy”, whereas EVS is long-term (two to 12 months) and “...aims to develop **solidarity, mutual understanding and tolerance** among young people, while contributing to **strengthening social**

²⁶ The European Voluntary Service (EVS) was established as a pilot program in 1996 and became part of the "Youth for Europe" program in 1998. As of 2015 Erasmus + programs are open to all EU member states and the Non EU member states of Macedonia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, and Turkey. Certain Actions of the program are also open to partner countries in the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo (*), Montenegro, Serbia), the Southern Mediterranean (Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Tunisia), the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine), and the Russian Federation. Source: Salto-Youth. 2015. "Cooperation with Western Balkans under Erasmus+: Youth in Action." Retrieved October 29, 2015 (<https://www.salto-youth.net/rc/see/seevia/>).

cohesion and promoting **active citizenship**.”²⁷ The goals of these programs align with the values of counter-neoliberal volunteering.

Most recently, in 2011 the EU established a pilot international volunteer development program: the *EU Aid Volunteers or European Voluntary Humanitarian Aid Corps* (starting in 2016). This program is for EU citizens and residents and offers opportunities for participation in humanitarian aid operations outside of the EU, as well as online volunteer opportunities (EU Aid Volunteers official website). Some post-socialist countries now have their own international volunteer initiatives (i.e. Estonia promotes volunteering in Georgia and Africa), while others (Croatia, Russia or Kazakhstan) are expected to launch such initiatives (Powell 2010:55).

Clearly, post-socialist countries participated in both receiving and sending international volunteers but there is no systematic comparative data about the volume and direction of those flows over time and for each country, nor for the purpose of volunteer activities.²⁸ Data and research on domestic volunteering, especially among European post-socialist countries, however, lends itself to certain hypothesis about the role of international volunteering in the post-socialist transformation.²⁹ In the literature on volunteering it is often stated that at the beginning of

²⁷ Source: European Parliament, 2006. “Decision No 1719/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing the Youth in Action programme for the period 2007 to 2013. OJ L 327, 24.11.2006. Retrieved October 19, 2015 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=uriserv%3Ac11080>).

²⁸ Data for 2007, 2012, and 2013 indicates that the number of participants in Youth Exchanges is much higher compared to EVS but that both have grown over time reaching 80,000 participants in Youth Exchanges and close to 10,000 for EVS in 2013 for all participating countries. The number of participants per country varies from as low as 200 participants in Youth Exchanges and 50 participants in EVS from Lithuania to as high as 9,000 participants in Youth Exchanges from Denmark and more than 1,400 participants in EVS from Turkey. Source: European Commission. 2015. “Youth: Supporting Youth Actions in Europe.” Retrieved October 29, 2015 (http://ec.europa.eu/youth/library/reports/youth-in-action-2013_en.pdf accessed 9-18-15).

²⁹ *Voluntarism and Public Institutions* (ADP-ZID 2005) covers 4 countries in the Balkans: Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia. *Volunteering in the European Union* (Mathou 2010) covers 27 national reports on volunteering including 10 post-socialist countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. *Volunteering Infrastructure in Europe* (European Volunteer Center 2012) covers 29 countries across Europe including 14 post-socialist countries: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia. *Employee Volunteering and Employee Volunteering in Humanitarian Aid in Europe* (Perez et al. 2013)

transitions “voluntary work” carried negative associations because during communism “voluntary” activities were in fact mandatory. Citizens (including students) were obliged to volunteer for production of collective property both in agriculture and industry. The latter is purported as the reason for the low levels of voluntary participation and weak voluntary sectors in former state socialist countries compared to other EU countries. Low levels of voluntary participation in the reports are seen as problematic because they are associated with low levels of democratic consolidation or progress towards the second goal of transition. Indeed, many international donor organizations and international volunteer organizations actively promoted volunteering.³⁰ If people were reluctant to volunteer because of the negative legacies of voluntary work during communism, then a change of perceptions from communist associations of volunteering as “working under political pressure or being servile to the regime” (Agnes and Nros in Association for Democratic Prosperity – Zid [ADP-ZID] 2005:28) to positive associations of volunteering for the public good as an act of free will should help (European Volunteer Center [EVC] 2012). Under this rationale, the role of international development volunteers was to exemplify this new motivation to volunteer or in other words to *serve as new positive volunteer role models* for the local people.

More nuanced assessments about the volunteer landscape before and after 1989 (Powell 2010), however, note that during communism forced unpaid labor was not the only domestic voluntary practice. There were other volunteer initiatives like the movements for the protection

covers 33 countries including 14 post-socialist countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

³⁰ For example, the Association for Voluntary Service Organizations helped to develop voluntary service with 200 organizations in Central and Eastern Europe that had little prior experience or knowledge of voluntary service (Sherridan 2006 19), while the United Nations Volunteers, the Office for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), USAID, and Peace Corps provided support for volunteering “...especially in area of lobbying for volunteering legal framework and for the recognition of volunteering by local governments” (EVC 2012:59).

of the environment that were more independent and certain voluntary practices such as spring cleanings continued to enjoy popular support in some places after 1989. Altogether,

It is very difficult to make any general statement about how people felt about such practices, as the answers vary not only from country to country, but even from individual to individual. A large, but different, proportion of the population in each of the Region's countries did identify with these activities and were proud of them. There is considerable nostalgia now, especially amongst some of the older generation, and especially (but not only) in former Yugoslavia for the order, fellowship and collective purpose which they associate with those events. (Powell 2010:35)

What seems to be of more concern are "...the particularly low level of participation in organizations that address social welfare, since most people in post-communist countries hold the opinion that the responsibility for addressing social issues rests with the state and not with the citizens" (Mathou 2010:48). The issue here is that people were reluctant to volunteer because they had a different view about the purpose of volunteering in society. An increase in voluntary participation in social welfare activities would require *the rethinking of social welfare from an issue of rights to an issue of needs*. The latter is very much in line with the neoliberal logic that citizens should take responsibility for their own social welfare, not the state. In this light, the role of international development volunteers would be not simply to support a change of attitudes towards volunteering but a substantive change in the understanding of the relationship between society (the government) and the individual. Part of this processes then involved a transition from systems of mandatory public work toward civic service (Kuti 2004).

THE LOCAL BULGARIA CONTEXT

Bulgaria's Post-socialist Trajectory, a Very Brief History

Between 1990 and 2015 the Human Development Index (HDI) for Bulgaria increased from 0.695 to 0.782 ranking the country 59th among the high human development countries in the world.³¹ The World Bank considers it a developing country with an upper middle level income.³² Below is a very brief summary of the political and economic events that led to these changes organized in three historical periods: (1) 1990 – 1996 Political and Economic Instability in the Early Transition Years, (2) 1997 – 2008 Economic Reform and Integration in Western Structures; and (3) 2009 – 2013 Renewed Political Instability and Global Economic Crisis.

Political and Economic Instability in the Early Transition Years (1990 – 1996):

Some analysts claim that Bulgaria's post-socialist transition took a path that "...was different from elsewhere in Eastern Europe ...[because] ...the scenario that Gorbachev worked for in much of Eastern Europe was played out here" (Deacon and Vidinova in Deacon 1992:69). In Bulgaria the "overthrow" of the communist regime was orchestrated by the communist party itself. The secretary of the party, Todor Zhivkov, was deposed on November 10, 1989 and the party agreed to call free elections for a Constitutional Assembly in 1990. The first free elections in June 1990 were won by the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the reformed Bulgarian Community Party, which "...preserved its nearly absolute grip on power until the beginning of 1992, and generally retained its hegemonic position in national politics – on both the central and especially at the local level - until 1997" (Ganev 2007:43). The 1992 elections, after the passing of the new constitution in 1991, were won by the pro-reform democratic opposition - the Union

³¹ Source: United Nations Development Program. 2015. "Human Development Reports: Bulgaria." Retrieved February 11, 2016 (<http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/BGR#>).

³² Source: World Bank. 2016. "Countries: Bulgaria." Retrieved February 11, 2016 (<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bulgaria/overview#3>).

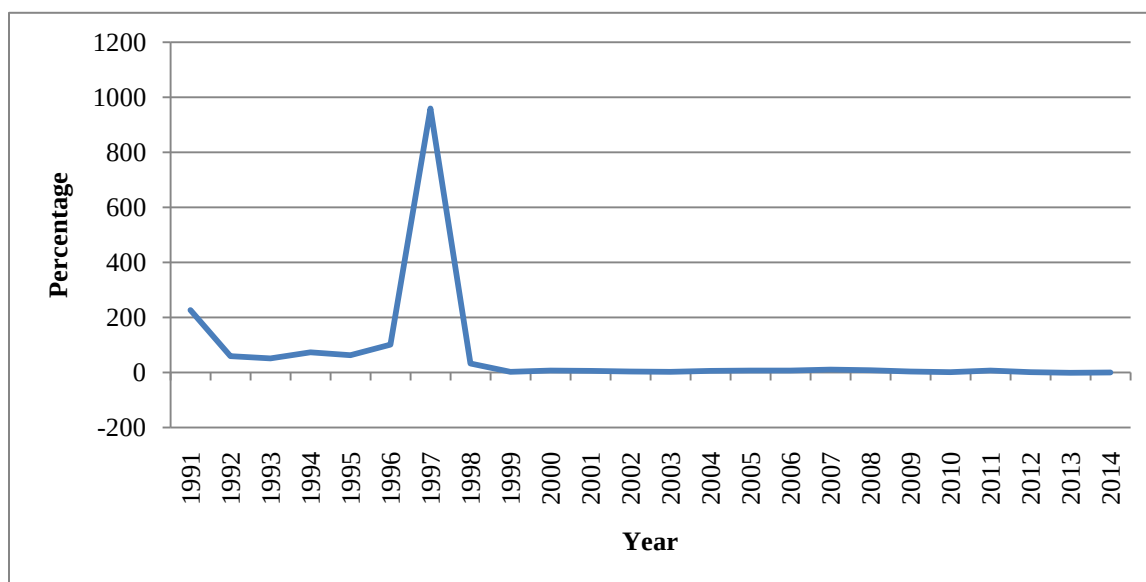
of Democratic Forces (SDS) - which formed a coalition government with the predominantly Turkish Movement for Rights and Freedom (DPS) under Philip Dimitrov as a Prime Minister. The government pursued an "...ambitious economic reform strategy in conjunction with an IMF agreement" which was unpopular and led to a vote of no confidence a year later and a political crisis (Pop-Eleches 2009:220). Between 1992 and 1997 Bulgaria had five different governments including two by the socialists, one by the democrats, and two acting governments. In the same period Bulgaria took the first steps towards European integration by signing two Trade Agreements with the EU (European Economic Community at the time) in 1990 and 1993 and applied for EU membership in 1995.

On the economic front, there were "...recurrent surges in inflation, stumbling structural reform and a series of banking crises (Mihov 1999). The series of "selection" stop-go reforms, with the IMF providing structural adjustment loans and then suspending its support when the government failed to comply with the conditions in response to public pressures, placed the country in danger of default and the devaluation of the Bulgarian lev culminating in the 1995-1996 economic crisis and violent anti-government protests throughout the country in January 1997 and early elections in May (Pop-Eleches 2009). In 1997 the inflation rate reached an all time high of 2019.50 % in March³³ and an annual all time high of 959% (see Figure 5).

Integration in Western Structures (1997 – 2009): The May 1997 early elections were won by the democratic opposition (SDS) that formed the first post-socialist government to complete a full four-year term. The new government led by Ivan Kostov as a Premier agreed to implement IMF-style structural reforms in order to stabilize the economy starting in July 1997,

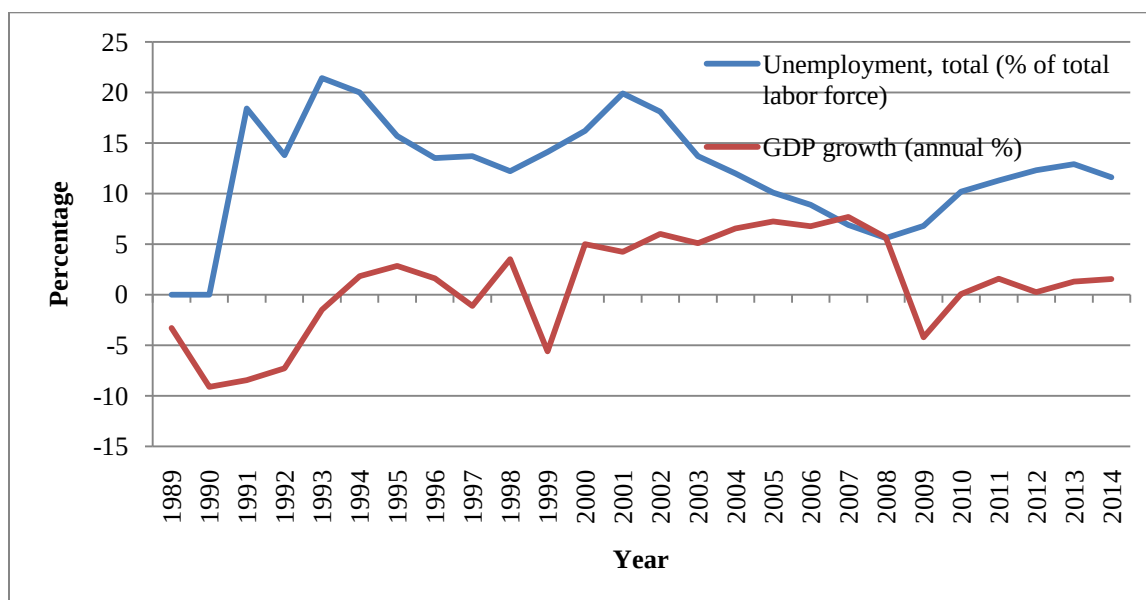
³³ Source: Trading Economics. 2016. "Bulgaria Inflation Rate". Retrieved October 29, 2015 (<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/bulgaria/inflation-cpi>)

Figure 5: Inflation in Bulgaria (annual %), 1991 – 2014



Source: World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files; Data from the World Development Indicators Database.

Figure 6: Unemployment and GDP Growth in Bulgaria, 1989 – 2014



Source: World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files. International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database. Data from the World Development Indicators Database.

which included the introduction of a currency board arrangement,³⁴ acceleration of privatization, recovery of the banking sector, a comprehensive tax reform, and several other macroeconomic measures (Mihov 1999:2). The “reward” was that the European Council granted Bulgaria an EU Candidate Status which launched the accession process, months later in December 1997.

The implementation of the reforms resulted in economic growth but the unemployment rate reached a high of 19.9 % in 2001, which was close to the all time high of 21.4 % for 1993 and 20.2 % in 1994 (see Figure 6).

More importantly, the economic reforms were accompanied by a decrease of civil liberties (Figure 7) and serious corruption scandals. The electorate responded by supporting a new party led by the returned from exile former king of Bulgaria, Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha³⁵ with his National Movement Simeon II (NDSV), which won the June 2001 elections. NDSV formed a coalition government with DPS and continued the IMF- reforms started by the previous government. In 2002, the European Commission declared that Bulgaria had a functioning market economy and “...Bulgaria became the showcase example of IMF conditionality” (Pop-Eleches 2009:217). The EU negotiations, which began in 2000, “...required privatization of the financial sector, land, energy, and telecommunications and tariff reduction on agricultural and industrial product” (Appel and Orenstein 2015:13-14).

In the mid-2000s Bulgaria continued its Western political integration. In 2004, it became a NATO member and the European Council confirmed the conclusion of accession negotiations with Bulgaria expected to become a member in January 2007. Despite these successes, NDSV

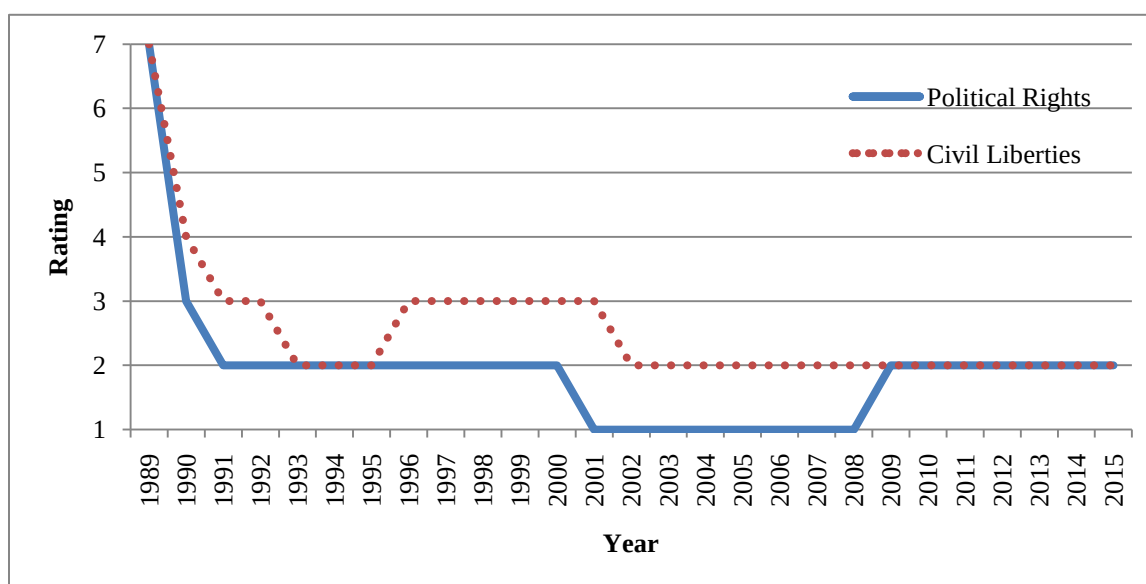
³⁴ The Bulgarian Lev was pegged to the Douche mark and consequently to the Euro where one Douche mark/Euro was traded for two Leva. The board is still in place today at the same rate.

³⁵ The return of the former king is another peculiar feature of Bulgaria’s post-socialist period. He is one of only two monarchs in history to have become the head of government through democratic elections. Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia is the other: Source: Wikipedia. 2016. “Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha.” Retrieved February 2011, 2016 (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simeon_Saxe-Coburg-Gotha).

lost the June 2005 elections to BSP but remained in power as a member of the BSP coalition government between the three biggest parties: BSP, NDSV and DPS. On January 1, 2007 Bulgaria entered the EU with a special cooperation and verification mechanism to address specific benchmarks in the areas of judicial reform and the fight against corruption and organized crime. Post-EU membership Bulgaria continued to adopt neoliberal policies on its own volition, without the prompting of international financial institutions or the EU. For example, the government adopted a flat tax on personal income which dropped the top marginal tax rate from 24% in 2007 to 10% in 2008 (Appel and Orenstein 2015:16).

Renewed Political Instability amidst the Global Economic Crisis (2009 – 2013): The July 2009 elections were won by GERB, a new center-right party led by Boyko Borisov (former member of NDSV and mayor of Sofia). According to Freedom House, after 2009 there were retreats from previous advances on most democracy measures with corruption being the worst area, followed by decreases in the scores for independent media, national democratic governance, and judicial framework and independence (see Figure 8). However, there was an improvement in the civil society measure that reflected the 2013 anti-government protests against high electricity, hot water bills, and corruption, which led to the resignation of the government months before the end of its 4-year term. Surprisingly, the early elections in May 2013 were won once again by GERB, the first party to win two consecutive elections since 1989 but without a majority of the seats. Unable to form a coalition government, GERB passed the mandate to the second winner – BSP – which formed a government led by Plamen Oresharski in coalition with DPS. The Oresharski government faced massive anti-government protests, the largest since the 1997 protests, from the beginning and until it was forced to resign in July 2014.

Figure 7: Trends in Bulgaria's Freedom Status, 1989 – 2015

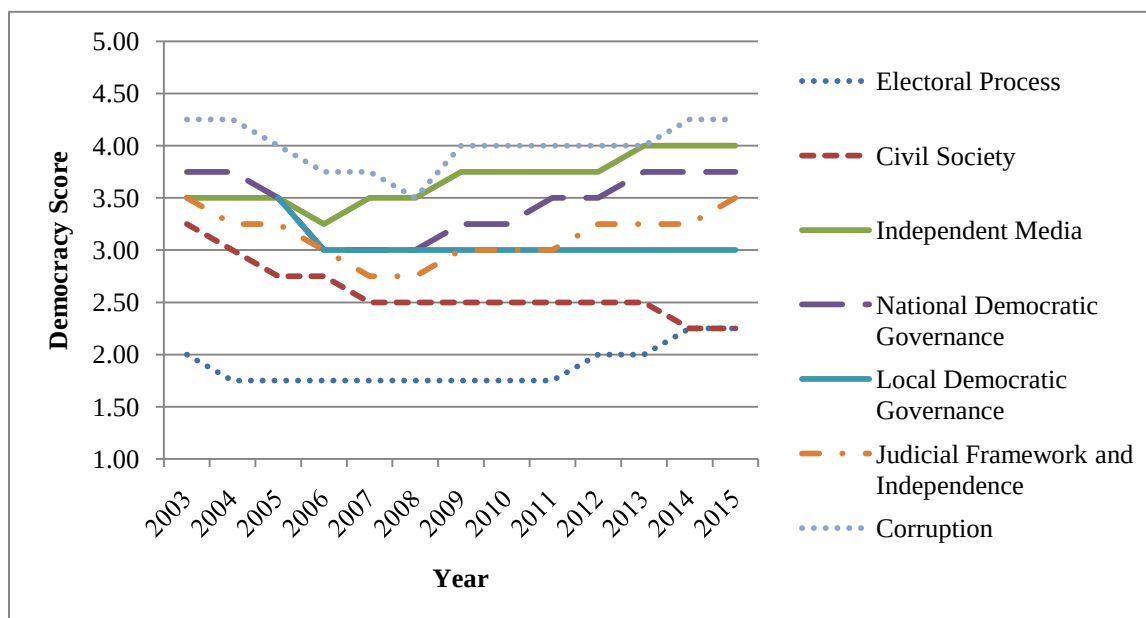


Source: Freedom House, Individual country ratings and status, Freedom in the World (FIW) 1973-2016.

Note: Until 2003, countries whose combined average ratings for Political Rights and for Civil Liberties fell between 1.0 and 2.5 were designated "Free"; between 3.0 and 5.5 "Partly Free," and between 5.5 and 7.0 "Not Free."

Beginning with the ratings for 2003, countries whose combined average ratings fall between 3.0 and 5.0 are "Partly Free and those between 5.5 and 7.0 are "Not Free."

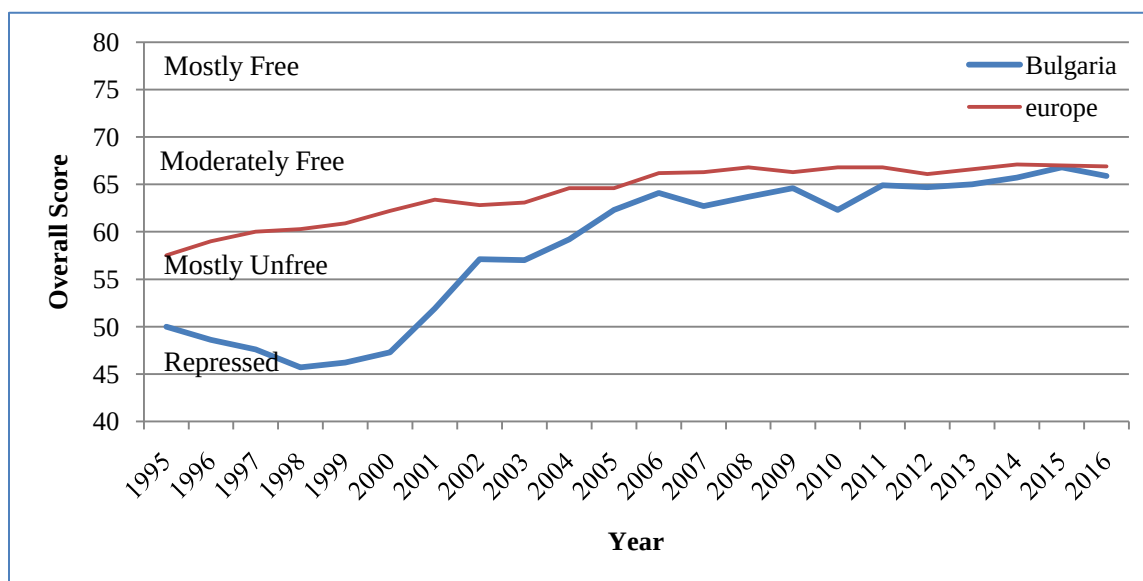
Figure 8: Democracy Scores for Bulgaria, 2003 – 2015



Source: Freedom House, Bulgaria Country Ratings.

On the economic front, in 2013, the Frazer Institute gave Bulgaria a score of 7.33 out of 10 on its economic freedom score placing the country in the 2nd quintile with most of Europe. Then, in 2016 the Heritage Foundation ranked the economic freedom of Bulgaria as “Mostly free,” also on par with the rest of Europe (see Figure 9).

Figure 9: Index of Economic Freedom, Bulgaria and Europe, 1995 - 2016



Source: Heritage Foundation, Index of Economic Freedom, Country Rankings.

Note: The Overall Score is graded on a scale of 0 to 100. A country's overall score is derived by averaging these ten economic freedoms in four broad categories: rule of law, limited government, regulatory efficiency, and open markets. , with equal weight being given to each. Scores between 40 to 49.9 are designated as “Repressed,” between 50 and 59.9 “Mostly Unfree,” between 60 and 69.9 as “Moderately Free,” between 70 and 79.9 as “Mostly Free,” and between 80 and 100 as “Free.”

Official Foreign Assistance for Bulgaria's Transition

The task of Western assistance to post-socialist countries according to Aslund (2012) was the introduction of new thinking. Bulgaria embarked on the path of post-socialist transition with “fewer Western-trained specialists and less hope of Western Assistance” (Pop-Eleches 2009:218). The main official foreign donors included the World Bank, the EU, the U.S., and various United Nations' agencies, especially the UNDP.

The World Bank was a major player by committing roughly \$3,7 billion consisting of 15 adjustment loans (US\$1.73 billion), 23 investment projects (US\$1.12 billion), one debt reduction loan (US\$125 million), four World Bank–managed Global Environment Facility (GEF) grants, two World Bank–managed Prototype Carbon Fund (PCF) operations, and two Institutional Development Fund (IDF) grants.³⁶ It started with two projects in 1991: Technical Assistance for Economic Reform Project for \$17 million and a Structural Adjustment Loan (SAL) for \$250 million. Of the 54 projects, 45 are closed, eight were dropped, and one is still active.

The European Union (EU) supported the transition through three pre-accession programs: PHARE, ISPA, and SAPARD. The PHARE (Poland Hungary Aid for Restructuring the Economy) program opened in 1992 and supported institution-building measures and associated investment. It “...committed a total of € 1.35 billion to Bulgaria during the 1992-2002 periods.”³⁷ In 2000, with the launch of the accession negotiation process, the EU opened the other two programs: ISPA (Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession) for large-scale environmental and transport infrastructure projects and SAPARD for agricultural and rural development. After 2007 the pre-accession programs were replaced with access to the EU Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund.³⁸

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) also began in 1992 “...to support sustainable human development through good governance, and is trying to encourage and participate in the better coordination of grants in Bulgaria” (United Nations, Commission on

³⁶ Source: World Bank. 2016. “Projects and Programs: Bulgaria.” Retrieved February 11, 2016 (<http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/bulgaria/projects>).

³⁷ Source: European Commission. 2015. “Bulgaria – EU-Bulgaria Relations. Retrieved October 29, 2015 (http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/archives/bulgaria/eu_bulgaria_relations_en.htm).

³⁸ Source: Bulgarian Government, Ministry of Finance. 2015. “Management of EU Funds.” Retrieved August 12, 2015 (<http://www.minfin.bg/en/page/73>).

Sustainable Development 2002). Between 1997 and 2002 the program focused on legislative and institutional reforms in the poverty, governance, and environment areas. A total of \$93 million were raised including 63% from the Bulgarian authorities (UNDP 2003).

Among the unilateral foreign donors, the **United States** acted first by opening an United States Agency for International Development (USAID) mission in Bulgaria in 1990.³⁹ During that period it invested over \$700 million dollars in local government reforms, court reforms, the development of two energy institutions, private microenterprise loans, the privatization of the banking sector, and civil society development. When it closed it left a legacy organization – the America for Bulgaria Foundation – established with the profits from the Bulgarian American Enterprise Fund with over \$200 million in profits from investments in private enterprise development in the country. The Foundation was one of the organizations that supported the 2011-2013 plan for Peace Corps’ transition out of the country as well as two of the main Peace Corps/Bulgaria legacy organizations: The Areté Youth Foundation and the CORPluS Foundation. In 2013, the America for Bulgaria Foundation was the largest foreign foundation followed by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the Velux Foundation (Bulgarian Philanthropy Forum 2013).

Volunteering in Bulgaria

The culture of volunteering and philanthropy in Bulgaria dates back to the Bulgarian Revival period in XIX and the establishment of public schools and community cultural centers (known as *chitalishe* in Bulgaria). The Bulgarian Red Cross is the oldest (since 1878) and largest volunteer organization with a history of working with volunteers before, during, and after

³⁹ Source: U.S. Department of State. 2007. “Archive: Closing Ceremony for the USAID Mission in Bulgaria.” Retrieved October 29, 2015(<http://2001-2009.state.gov/f/releases/remarks2007/93570.htm>).

communism. Still, the interest in research on volunteering in Bulgaria began with the establishment of organizations dedicated to the promotion of volunteerism in Bulgaria: the National Alliance of Voluntary Action (NAVA) in Plovdiv and CVS-Bulgaria (Cooperation for Voluntary Service) in the early 2000s⁴⁰ and includes only a handful of studies. The first nationally representative *Study on the Voluntary Sector in Bulgaria* came out in 2002 by the Science and Information Foundation. The main findings are that organized volunteering includes 6% of the population which is low compared to other European countries and is attributed to high unemployment combined with low incomes, low value of organized volunteering compared to self-help rooted in the legacies of “compulsory volunteering,” the lack of legal framework and status for volunteer work, as well the lack of national policy promoting volunteerism.

In 2006, the Bulgarian Center for Non-For-profit Law (BCNL) prepared a draft *Law on Volunteering* supported by the major volunteer organizations in the country backed up by their *Comparative Analysis of the European Legal Systems and Practices Regarding Volunteering*. The purpose of the analysis was to support the need for legislative framework that regulates volunteering. The analysis includes section on “International Volunteering” which highlights the issues of taxation of costs related to volunteering abroad and the issue of the lack of a volunteer visa that discourage local organizations to accept foreign volunteers.

A 2010 *Study on Volunteering in the European Union* confirms that Bulgaria continues to have the lowest levels of volunteering in the EU with less than 10% of the population and that its voluntary sector is “still emerging or poorly developed” (Mathou 2010). Interestingly, the report mentions that while in the past decade the number of volunteers has been stable, the number of voluntary organizations has increased. Also, while the public funding (state budget subsidies) for

⁴⁰ The Law on Not for Profit Legal Entities in Bulgaria was adopted in September 2000 and has been in force since January 2001.

the voluntary sector is low, "...a trend towards increasing commissioning of the provision of public services to non-profit organizations can be noticed" (Mathou 2010: 131). The latter is related to amendments to the Public Procurement Law (1999) and the 2003 Social Assistance Act for organizing competitions for outsourcing of social services both of which allow non-profit organizations to compete for government contracts at the local and central levels. Perhaps in turn the few domestic studies since 2010 focus primarily on attitudes towards volunteering and finding ways to motivate volunteer participation is the delivery of social services under contracts.⁴¹ These trends speak of neoliberal structuring of the volunteer sector in Bulgaria.

While much of the assistance to Eastern Europe was in the form of "advice" or technical assistance, research on volunteer development assistance is limited and there is no systematic research on the number, country of origin or projects of different international development volunteers in Bulgaria. The *Country Report for Bulgaria* within the 2010 *Study on Volunteering in the European Union* says that there is "no data available" for "programmes promoting/supporting volunteering at transnational level." Through my research I identified that in addition to Peace Corps, foreign volunteers in Bulgaria came with the following programs: Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs),⁴² ACDI/VOCA, CVS-Bulgaria,⁴³ and the European Voluntary Service (EVS).⁴⁴ None of domestic reports/studies on volunteering in

⁴¹ Bulgarian studies on volunteerism include the *Study on Youth Volunteerism in Bulgaria* (BCAF 2010), *Volunteering across Europe - Organizations, Promotion, Participation: Country Report for Bulgaria* (BCNL 2010), the *National Survey on Attitudes towards Volunteerism in Bulgaria* (NAVA 2013), and the *New Aspects in Volunteerism – Survey on Attitudes towards Volunteerism among active Volunteers* (NAVA 2014).

⁴² Bulgaria received a total of 247 JOCVs between 1992 and 2005 when Japan ended its foreign aid assistance programs to Bulgaria. Sources: Government of Japan, Embassy of Japan in Bulgaria. 2016. "Japanese Foreign Policy" (in Bulgarian). Retrieved on October 29, 2015 (http://www.bg.emb-japan.go.jp/bg/oda/economical_collaboration/index.html).

⁴³ CVS-Bulgaria began hosting international work camps in 1998 (BCNL 2010).

⁴⁴ Between 2000 and 2008 more than 200 EVS volunteers from different European Union countries served in Bulgaria (BCAF 2010:8).

Bulgaria speaks directly about the activities of foreign volunteers in the country. One of the reports includes a comment that identifies the West as a source of models for volunteer practices:

The subjective feeling of focus group participants is that volunteerism in Bulgaria is not sufficiently spread but that there is an improvement. Comparisons are often made along the line “Bulgaria – and – the West” where the West is not only Europe but also America (USA), where volunteer models have been imported from. (Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation [BCAF] 2010:8, translation from Bulgarian to English is mine)

Specific Western examples of volunteer models include YMCA, Let us be Friends, and the Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Also, the 2010 BCLP *Volunteering Across Europe Country Report* includes Peace Corps/Bulgaria Country Director, Lesley Duncan in its “List of Persons Interviews” as well as Antoaneta Yankabakova with YMCA-Gabrovo who is described as having “...worked closely with Peace Corps/Bulgaria, introducing the volunteer concept in the country through the work of American volunteers” (Bulgarian Center for Non-For-profit Law 2010:46). This is evidence that nationally Peace Corps was recognized for its role in the promotion of domestic volunteering. With over 200 volunteers in the country at the time Peace Corps was most likely the largest international volunteer program in the country.

THE PEACE CORPS ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

The Core Peace Corps Goals

The Peace Corps was established on March 1, 1961 and traces its roots and mission to John F. Kennedy’s presidential campaign and his call to students to serve their country by living and working in developing countries. Since 1961, more than 220,000 Americans have served in

140 countries worldwide.⁴⁵ The official mission of the organization is to promote peace and friendship by fulfilling three core goals:

- **Goal 1:** To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women
- **Goal 2:** To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served
- **Goal 3:** To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.⁴⁶

Goal 1 represents the development piece of the organization. In the *2010 Annual Volunteer Survey: Bulgaria*, which is used to assess “what is working well and areas for improvement” by the volunteers, Goal 1 is further specified to mean “To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women, **by transferring skills to and building capacity of host country nationals.**” The language of Goal 1 is a mix of a two approaches. The *transfer of skills* represents the modernization paradigm and promotes a needs-based approach to development based on one-way interaction (technical assistance) between the Peace Corps Volunteers (the trained men and women from the developed modern world) and the peoples of interested countries (who are in need of development or modernization = Westernization). Such an approach should support notions of cultural superiority, simplistic understandings of development and the world and therefore the formation of volunteers with neoliberal subjectivity. Walker et al. (2008) argue that technical assistance in general is susceptible to neoliberal styles of development.

⁴⁵ Source: Peace Corps. 2015. “Fast Facts” Retrieved August 12, 2015 (<https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/history/>).

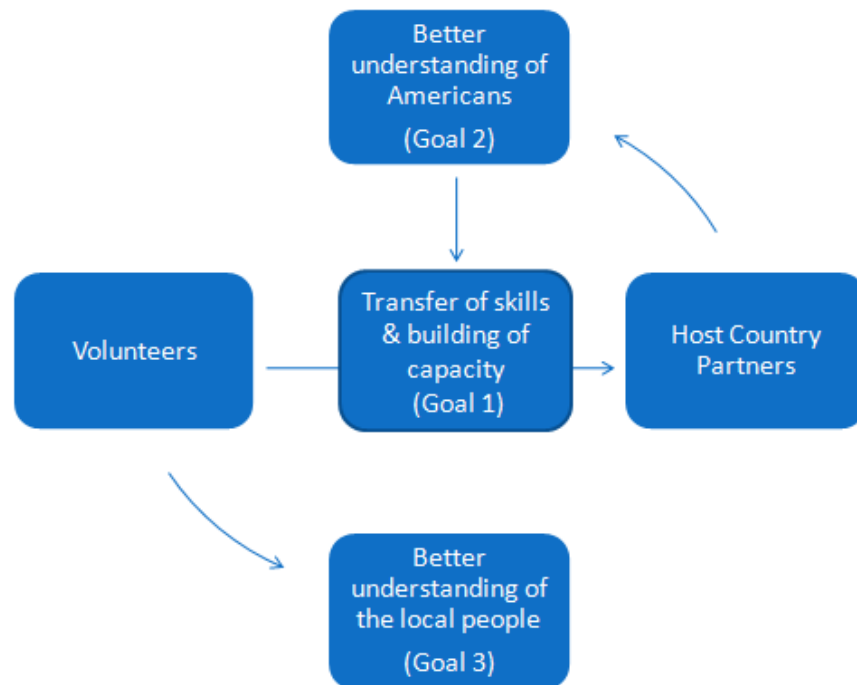
⁴⁶ Source: Peace Corps. 2015. “About” Retrieved August 12, 2015 (<https://www.peacecorps.gov/about/>).

Then, *capacity building* represents the human development perspective, which assumes the individual as the unit of human development. According to Nederveen Pieterse, this approach “...does not challenge neoliberalism and the principle of competitiveness but endorsed it [and...] may enable development business-as-usual to carry on more competitively under a general ‘humane’ aura” (2010:135). Other scholars have gone even further in their critique of human development and characterize the approach as the neoliberal governance of development (Phillips and Ilkan 2004). By emphasizing “...promoting *local* capacity building, focusing on the development of people, not things” (Peace Corps 1999:42), Peace Corps adds a third development approach to its development model, that of community or alternative development.

Goals 2 and 3 explicitly promote a two-way interaction between the volunteers and the local people and represent the cross-cultural exchange piece of Peace Corps. The latter should support notions of cultural relativism, complex understanding of development and world interdependence and therefore the formation of volunteers who are critical global citizens (counter-neoliberal subjectivity).

Peace Corps, views the three goals and especially Goal 1 and Goal 2 as interdependent and “...central to the Peace Corps experience, as HCNs [host country nationals] develop relationships with Volunteers who communicate in the local language, share everyday experiences, and work collaboratively” (Peace Corps 1999:12). In the latter sense, development is based on local culture. In Figure 10, I visualize the interaction between the Core Peace Corps Goals.

Figure 10: Diagram of the Peace Corps Development Model



Over the years, different Peace Corps Directors (for the whole agency) established their legacies by championing initiatives that emphasized Goal 1, Goal 2, or Goal 3. Such goal-specific approaches strengthened or weakened mechanisms for neoliberalization in the deployment of Peace Corps' programming worldwide. For example, directors in the 1960s focused on the recruitment of generalist volunteers (with little or no work experience), in the 1970s the focus shifted to specialist volunteers, and in the 1980s directors sought to balance the number of generalists and specialists (Lihosit 2011). Generalist volunteers typically focus more on the goals of cultural learning and understanding, whereas specialists volunteers on providing technical assistance. As shown in Table 7, the areas of technical assistance (or sector programs) that volunteers worked has also changed with English Teacher volunteers comprising the largest but yet decreasing share of volunteers (55% in 1963 to 38% in 2015). Community development

split into separate business (in the 1970s), environment and forestry (in the 1990s), and youth in development programs (in the 2000s). Health has grown from 8.2% in 1963 to 24% in 2015. The short-term Peace Corps Response (PCR) program was added in 1995.

Table 7: Trends in the Percentage of Peace Corps Volunteers by Sector Project, Worldwide

Sector Programs	1963	1965	1973	1977	1994	1998	2015
English Teachers	54.6%	51.8%	48.4%	44.4%	40%	37%	38%
Community Development	25.6%	26.2%	12.7%	12.9%	-	-	-
Health	8.2%	9.9%	8.8%	16.6%	17%	18%	24%
Agriculture	7.6%	7.9%	22.3%	17.1%	18%	9%	5%
Business	-	-	3.3%	9.0%	9%	13%	9%
Environment and Forestry	-	-	-	-	13%	18%	12%
Urban Planning	-	-	-	-	3%	-	-
Youth in Development	-	-	-	-	-	-	9%
Peace Corps Response					-	-	3%
Other	4.0%	4.2%	4.4%	-	-	5%	-

Source: Lihosit 2011.

Note: Other includes housing, energy and conservation, and community services programs.

When the accomplishment of Goal 2 (Better understanding of Americans) is assessed, Peace Corps measures HCNs opinions of Americans prior to and after interacting with Volunteers. In this sense, Goal 2 has a *public diplomacy function*. Related to this is the purpose of Peace Corps vis-à-vis U.S. foreign policy. During the Cold War the unspoken purpose of the organization was to support U.S. foreign policy:

In addition, it was meant to provide a new expression of U.S. character and foreign policy—an idealistic sense of purpose and a means of countering the expansion of communism throughout the world. It was anticipated that through contact at the grassroots level, Peace Corps volunteers would help promote a better understanding of the American people, who in turn would better understand cultures of other peoples.

(U.S. General Accounting Office [GAO] 1994: 2)

The extent to which Peace Corps openly *supports U.S. foreign policy* concerns the question of Peace Corps' autonomy.⁴⁷ In periods of agency independence the demands of U.S. foreign policy has been perceived as dangerous to the credibility of the organization (Meisler 2011: xi). The Peace Corps expansion in Eastern Europe was a clear example when the administration enlisted the Peace Corps into its foreign policy campaign in support of the new geo-political reorientation of Eastern Europe to the West, after the collapse of state socialism in 1989. The logic of expansion of Peace Corps in Eastern Europe therefore exemplifies development as Westernization, which post-development scholars like Escobar's (2012) critique as a form of cultural imperialism. The latter is at odds with the counter-neoliberal movements for global solidarity and equality.

The layering of different development approaches in the core Peace Corps goals plus the foreign policy function of Peace Corps has created a contradictory development model with some approaches enabling while others countering neoliberal styles of development.

Eastern Europe as the New Peace Corps Frontier

When the Cold War ended the opportunity to expand the Peace Corps in the former Second World became a subject of debate. Those who were in favor of sending Peace Corps volunteers in the former Second World argued that the region needed both financial assistance and help in gaining the knowledge and language skills to join the global community:

They needed to rebuild their knowledge of the free-enterprise system. They needed fresh ideas and the tools to communicate with a world they hardly knew. [...] The dramatic

⁴⁷ Peace Corps lost its independence as a an agency in 1971 until 1982 when Congress reestablishes it as an independent agency (Lihosit 2011)

political change and the need and overwhelming desire to join the global community triggered an explosion of interest in English. (Ashabranner 1994:23)

The volunteers would in turn bring back knowledge about the people and countries that America had very little access to during the Cold War. The latter would support directly the new US foreign policy in the region because such a historic expansion would “....be a catalyst for improving relationships with all countries where there has been a history of tension, suspicion or a lack of communication” (Peace Corps 1992:2).

Those who opposed the opening of Peace Corps programs in Eastern Europe argued that Peace Corps was not designed to meet the needs of countries in transition but of the countries in the Third World and therefore would not be very effective. The arguments against going to Eastern Europe were that:

...the new assignments would lack the traditional rigors of working in the ‘Third World’ that it would not match the ‘suffering’ the Third World had to offer, that these will be easy assignments [Peace Corps] Some EE countries – Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic – were countries with literate, skilled populations that probably needed investment far more than they needed Peace Corps Volunteers. (Meisler 2011:174)

Moreover, there were concerns that without a substantial increase in the budget such an expansion would be at the expense of Third World countries. Indeed while assurances were made that this will not be the case existing programs experienced budget cuts or negligent increases after Peace Corps entry into Eastern Europe (Meisler 2011:173).

Even though Peace Corps, and other foreign aid programs, lacked the knowledge of operating in a former communist country, the Bush Administration was determined to provide

assistance to the region.⁴⁸ The situation resembled the excitement and initial disappointments of the early years of Peace Corps: “On the eve of their departure [in June 1990], the first Volunteers to Poland and Hungary were greeted by President Bush in the White House Rose garden just the way Volunteers were once saluted by President Kennedy” (Meisler 2011:171).

By 1994, however, it was clear that the rush to introduce new Peace Corps programs in the former Eastern bloc had an overall negative impact on the quality of the programs (GAO 1994). Despite those difficulties, countries in the region continued to express an interest in receiving Peace Corps volunteers and between 1989 and 2003 Peace Corps opened a total of 22 new programs in the former Eastern bloc, 18 of those programs were established between 1989 and 1993. Among those were all former state socialist countries in Eastern Europe, all former soviet republics, except Belarus, and four out of the six former Yugoslav republics (Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Slovenia). Since 2003, the only new program that has opened in the region was Kosovo in 2013. The selection of countries in the region was done within a foreign assistance framework: “Peace Corps programs in the former Eastern bloc countries were selected in consultation with the host governments and in concert with the Department of State, which is responsible for coordinating U.S. assistance to the region” (GAO 1994:3).

By 2002 Peace Corps had pulled out of close to half of the Eastern European countries and some have suggested that it has “...continued only in those Eastern European countries and former Soviet republics that resembled those of the Third World” (Meisler 2011:174). To be more precise: of the 22 programs, nine programs closed by 2003, another five closed by 2013 and nine remain open in 2016 (see Table 8). Among the 14 closed programs, seven closed prior to the countries’ EU entry and two after their EU entry (Bulgaria and Romania). Bosnia and

⁴⁸ On November 28, 1989 the U.S. passed the East European Democracy Act, or SEED Act, which laid the foundation for two decades of consistent, tangible U.S. support (U.S. Department of State 2007).

Herzegovina applied for EU membership after Peace Corps closed the program. Russia asked Peace Corps to leave.

Table 8: Peace Corps Programs in Eastern Europe and Central Asia

Program	From	To	Years	Vs	EU Status: Year granted
Closed					
Bosnia & Herzegovina	2000	2002	2	21	Potential Candidate: 2008
Bulgaria	1991	2013	22	1300	Member: 2007
Czech Republic	1990	1997	7	234	Member: 2004
Estonia	1992	2002	10	175	Member: 2004
Hungary	1990	1997	7	354	Member: 2004
Kazakhstan	1993	2011	18	1176	
Latvia	1992	2002	10	217	Member: 2004
Lithuania	1992	2002	10	219	Member: 2004
Poland	1990	2001	11	963	Member: 2004
Romania	1991	2013	22	1179	Member: 2007
Russia	1992	2003	11	729	
Slovak Republic	1990	2002	12	329	Member: 2004
Turkmenistan	1993	2013	20	734	
Uzbekistan	1992	2005	13	767	
Open					
Albania	1992; 2003	1997; -	18	605	Candidate: 2014
Armenia	1992		23	900	
Azerbaijan	2003		12	500	
Georgia	2001		14	585	
Kosovo	2013		2	26	Potential Candidate: 2012
Kyrgyz Republic	1993		22	1075	
Macedonia	1996		19	585	Candidate: 2005
Moldova	1993		22	1280	
Ukraine	1993		22	2750	

Sources: Peace Corps. 2015. "Countries." Retrieved August 22, 2015 (<https://www.peacecorps.gov/countries/>); European Commission. 2015. "European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations." Retrieved October 29, 2015 (http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index_en.htm).

The nine programs that remain open account for 15% of all Peace Corps Volunteers in 2016.⁴⁹ Two are EU Candidate Countries (Albania and Macedonia), one is an EU Potential Candidate (Kosovo) and three have signed an EU Association Agreement (Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine). The fact that Peace Corps continued to operate in countries after their EU membership challenges the notions that Peace Corps operates only in countries that resemble those of the Third World.

CONCLUSION

The post-socialist transformation exemplified the triumph and sustaining power of neoliberalism where neoliberal reforms were pursued first through Washington Consensus reforms, then through EU integration and finally in the context of global competition for capital. Multiple post-socialist trajectories have emerged with democratization unfolding as an uneven rather than unilinear process and with no uniformity in the consequences of economic reforms among either the shock therapy or the non-shock therapy countries. Still, scholars distinguish between clusters of countries with the countries in Central Europe – Poland, Hungary, the Czech and the Slovak Republics – on the lead and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries falling behind.

Bulgaria's trajectory followed this general trend of neoliberalization starting with IMF-style economic reforms that were implemented on and off until 1997 when they took off forcefully with the introduction of the currency board regime, followed by neoliberal reforms as part of the process of negotiations for EU membership between 2000 and 2004, and on its own after European membership in 2007 through tax-policy reforms that aimed to attract foreign investment in the country. Politically, the country seems to have come full circle. It started with a

⁴⁹ Source: Peace Corps. 2015. "Fast Facts." Retrieved August 2, 2015 (<http://www.peacecorps.gov/about/fastfacts/>).

period of government instability until 1997 and has entered a new period of government instability in 2009 in conjunction with the Global Economic Crises.

While the research on international development volunteering in the region, and especially in Bulgaria, is limited there is indication that the landscape of volunteering is characterized by both continuities and discontinuities with the past. The perception is that the concept of volunteering needs to be re-invented/re-imagined to serve the needs of the newly emerged service delivery voluntary sector. International volunteers were seen as role models that can support a positive change of attitudes towards volunteering based on free will, while the programming of international development volunteer models was supportive of a substantive change in the understanding of the relationship between society (the government) and the individual and the rethinking of social welfare from an issue of rights to an issue of needs. There is evidence that Peace Corps provided one such volunteer model.

Finally, the analysis of the Core Peace Corps Goals demonstrates how the organization can facilitate both neoliberal and counter-neoliberal processes of transformation. The focus on community development and participation supports alternative development approaches, while the adoption of the human development perspective does not challenge and endorses neoliberalism. Peace Corps' entry in Eastern Europe was justified on the grounds that it can assist with the large-scale goals of building democracies and market economies as well as in support of the U.S.'s foreign policy in the region and therefore utilized Peace Corps as a tool for development as Westernization, a form of cultural and economic imperialism. The expansion in Eastern Europe is therefore a return to the original Peace Corps contradiction of the 1960s when the organization mobilized the idealism of its volunteers in a global modernization project (Geidel 2015).

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describe the main components of the research design including: (1) the use of a case study informed by the actor-oriented approach as a research strategy, (2) the use of mixed methods and multiple sources of data as a data collection strategy, (3) the use of top-down and bottom-up approaches in the development discourse analysis of the data, and (4) the use of a participatory approach in the research process as a strategy to deal with the main data collection and analysis challenges.

RESEARCH STRATEGY: CASE STUDY

The Research Uses of the Case Study

Ragin and Becker (1992) argue that every social inquiry can be conceived as a case study because it is an analysis of social phenomena specific to time and place, while Gerring (2007) posits that case studies are intrinsically comparative because the process of case selection involves a consideration of a broader set of cases or cross-case analysis. More broadly, however, there have been three main views on the use of case studies: (1) as a specific type of research design, (2) as a particular kind of qualitative research method, and (3) as a method of selecting the source of data (Blaikie 2010). As a method of selecting the source of data, a case study means that the research focuses on a small number of key units of analysis in a considerable depth. As a particular kind of qualitative research method, a case study implies the use of non-quantitative approaches – ethnographic, clinical, anecdotal, participant observation, historical, etc. – in contrast to the use of quantitative methods such as surveys and experiments. As a

research strategy, a case study captures a particular logic of inquiry that can be pursued by the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. More specifically, it is a research strategy that focuses on a single phenomenon studied within its real-life context and which is characterized by multiple variables of interest and thus requiring multiple sources of evidence guided by certain theoretical propositions (Yin 2003 in Blaikie 2010:189). My study of the role of international development volunteering in post-socialist transformations utilizes the case study as a research strategy. The empirical focus is on one example (or a single case) of an organization – the Peace Corps – and its operation in one post-socialist country (Bulgaria). The main departure is that my study is embedded within a real-life, as well as a historical context (the study covers a long period of time over two decades).

Case Selection: Peace Corps/Bulgaria

Among the different 23 Peace Corps programs, I chose the Bulgaria program first on feasibility grounds: being a native Bulgarian speaker, having worked for Peace Corps/Bulgaria as a Technical Trainer (2000-2004) and being married to a Bulgaria RPCV, afforded me extensive access to various Peace Corps/Bulgaria networks, which facilitated the data collection process.

The Peace Corps/Bulgaria program presents a compelling case on both theoretical and methodological grounds. The program opened in 1991 and closed in 2013, making it one of the two longest operating programs in the region. This presents a unique opportunity for the capturing of development discourses immediately after the collapse of state socialism, through the years of negotiations for membership in the EU, and after the entry of the country in the

EU.⁵⁰ The fact that the program was closing at the time of my research was also beneficial in avoiding placing undue stress on former Peace Corps/Bulgaria staff, volunteers, and host organizations. For example, research participants were not constrained in sharing opinions that could undermine their employability (for the local staff), continued service (for the volunteers) or continued partnership with the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program (for the volunteer host organizations).

The use of a single-case (Bulgaria) rather than a multiple-case (Bulgaria in comparison to other Peace Corps programs in the region) research strategy fits the scope of a dissertation research (Blaxter et. al. 2002 and Bell 2005 in Blaikie 2010:187). More importantly it is appropriate given the lack of research on the deployment of Peace Corps or other international volunteering models in a post-socialist context. A single-case is sufficient to support the development of a generalization or a theory, which is the purpose of this research (Stake in Blaikie 2010:191). Embedded in this single country case study are other comparisons: of different development discourses at the organizational and individual levels and among the main actors involved in the implementation of the program (staff, volunteers, and local partners); comparisons between three legacy organizations; and historical comparisons (changes in the program before and after EU accession). In this sense, this is a complex single-case study that offers a deeper understanding of the evolution of an international volunteer development program from multiple perspectives.

⁵⁰ Bulgaria and Romania are the only two Peace Corps programs in the region that remained opened after the countries joined the EU, which by itself suggest important changes in perceptions of development.

The Actor-Oriented Approach to Development Case Studies

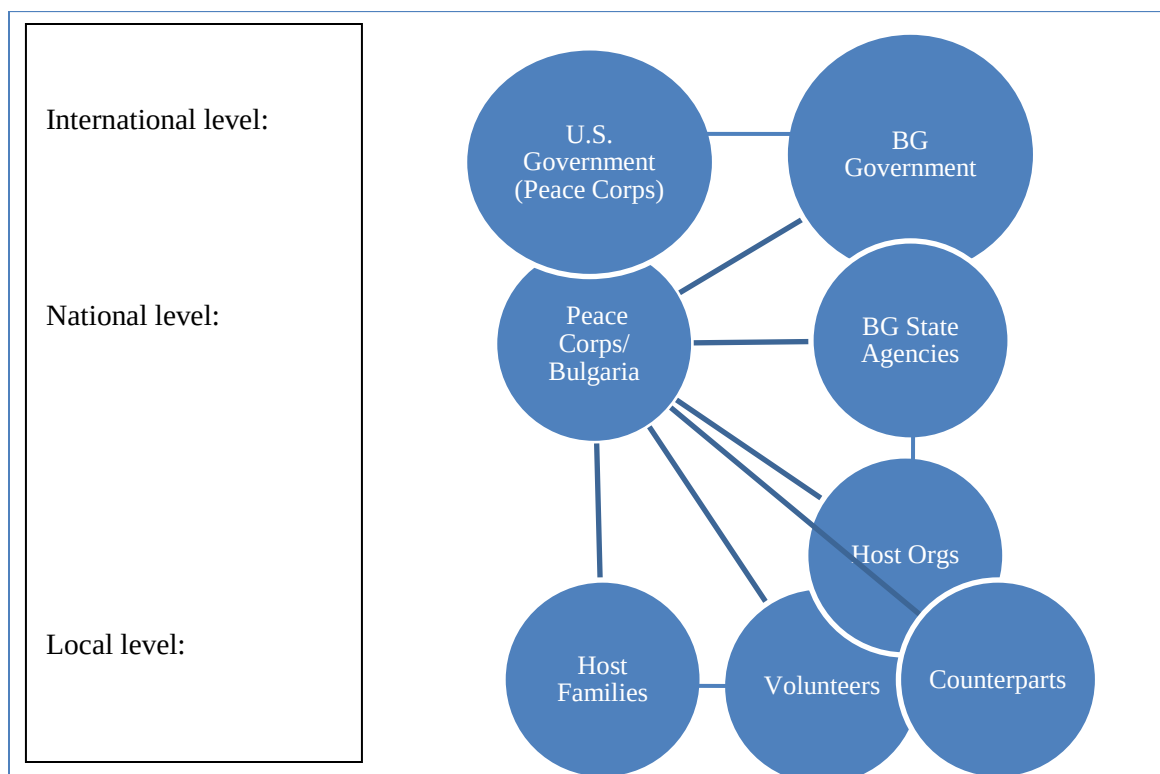
The opening of Peace Corps programs abroad involved the creation of a multi-level partnership structure involving various partners at the international, national, and local levels. In Bulgaria, the partnership structure included actors at three different levels (Figure 11 outlines the different actors at all levels). At the international (or policy) level, Paul Coverdell, Peace Corps Director, signed the country agreement as a representative of the U.S. government and the St.Stojtchev, Bulgarian Ambassador to the U.S. as a representative of the Bulgarian government. The latter provided the larger policy framework for the operation of Peace Corps in the country.

At the national (or management) level, the Peace Corps/Bulgaria staff and designated state agencies determined the sector programs for the Peace Corps volunteers that operated within *Framework Agreements* signed between the Country Director of Peace Corps in Bulgaria and the heads of corresponding state agencies. For example, the partnering agency for the Teaching English program was the Ministry of Education; for the Business program, the Ministry of the Economy; for the Environment program, the Ministry of Environment and Waters and the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests; and for the Youth program, the Ministry of Youth and Sports. These agreements specified the management parameters of the different sector programs.

At the local (or implementation) level, volunteers worked under *Memoranda of Understanding* signed between the Host (or sponsoring organization) for the volunteer and Peace Corps/Bulgaria. Host organizations included public schools and universities, local governments and agencies (such as mayoral, municipal and regional administrations, municipal children's and youth centers), local structures of state agencies (such as National and Nature Park Directorates, Forestry Units, and institutions for children with special needs), and independent NGOs such as

business/economic development centers, cultural centers (known as *chitalishte*), social service providers, environmental NGOs, and youth/volunteer associations. Volunteers worked in close collaboration with a designated counterpart⁵¹ from their host organization, known in Bulgaria as *satrudnik*, as well as with other colleagues, and community members. At this level were also the interactions between the volunteers and their local host families that they lived with during their pre-service training (PST).

Figure 11: Peace Corps/Bulgaria Partnership Structure



⁵¹ Peace Corps defines counterparts as people in the community that "...fulfill the capacity-building aspect of the Volunteers' work" (Peace Corps 2002:2). In Bulgaria, counterparts were selected by the host organization and were professional colleagues of the volunteer. In some cases, especially in smaller organizations, the counterpart was the same person as the volunteer supervisor who was "... a person in a leadership capacity in the host country organization or agency that is the primary sponsor of the Volunteer's site assignments and projects (Peace Corps 2002:5).

The Peace Corps/Bulgaria office and its program staff mediated relationships at all levels. The staff was responsible for the preparation of meetings with state agencies, the identification and selection of host organizations, PST sites, and host families, the delivery of pre- and in-service trainings, conflict management between the volunteers and their host organizations, and the translation of all program materials from/to English and Bulgarian.

The actor-oriented approach to the study of development is best suited to inform a case study of Peace Corps/Bulgaria because it "...stresses the interplay and mutual determination of 'internal' and 'external' factors and relationships, and... recognizes the central role played by human action and consciousness" (Long 2001:13). It is a dynamic approach that offers a social constructionist form of analysis of social change and continuity that was developed as a counterpoint to structural analysis of development processes that tend to emphasize the importance of external intervention. Accordingly, this case study engages with actors at all levels but to different degrees. At the international and national level I am interested at the official development discourse about the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria's post-socialist transformation. The main focus of the dissertation is at the local level and the development discourse of (1) the actors that designed and performed the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria: the program staff, the volunteers, and their local partners, and (2) to a lesser degree of the actors that continue to maintain the legacy of Peace Corps in Bulgaria: the organizations that were identified as strategic partners for the purpose of transferring Peace Corps resources and tools (also called legacy organizations). Thus, the only actors that were excluded from the research were host family representatives. The main reason was because the role of the host families is to assist with the accomplishment of the cross-cultural (Goals 2 and 3) and not with the development goals of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program.

DATA COLLECTION STRATEGY: MIXED METHODS

The Mixed-Methods or Multiple Data Sources Approach

The case study utilized a mixed methods data collection strategy - web surveys, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and archival research - that generated both quantitative and qualitative data. The mixing of methods was done in consideration of the kind of data needed to answer the posed research questions, as well as the nature and access to the various data sources or actors (individuals and organizations) that had to be involved in the research. An overview of the data collection methods by Peace Corps/Bulgaria actors is presented in Table 9.

Table 9: Data Collection Methods by Peace Corps/Bulgaria Actors

Level	U.S. Actors	Local (Bulgarian) Actors
International (policy)	<i>The U.S. Government (Peace Corps)</i> Archival Research	<i>The Bulgarian Government</i> Archival Research
National (management)	<i>Peace Corps/Bulgaria</i> Archival Research Interviews w/ Program staff	
Local (implementation)	<i>Peace Corps Volunteers</i> Web Surveys (subscribe and follow-up surveys) Interviews Focus Groups	<i>Local Partners</i> Interviews Focus Groups
	<i>Legacy Organizations</i> (Run by Both U.S. and Local Actors) Interviews w/ the leadership Participant Observation	

More importantly, different methods served different purposes or uses in the research design and analyses process. Cresswell and Clark (2007 in Blaikie 2010:224) describe four types of uses of mixed methods research design: triangulation, embedded, explanatory, and exploratory uses:

1. *Triangulation* concerns the convergence, transformation or validation of qualitative and quantitative data;
2. The *embedded procedure* occurs when one type of data is used in a supplementary role to help design the study or to elaborate procedures or to interpret the results;
3. The *explanatory procedure* involves: (1) the elaboration or explanation of qualitative data with quantitative data or vice-versa or (2) the use of quantitative methods for the selections of participants in a follow-up qualitative phase;
4. The *exploratory procedure* is similar to the embedded procedure but here the use of quantitative and qualitative methods concerns separate phases of the research such as the use of qualitative methods for the development of new quantitative measures or instruments rather than the supplementary use of qualitative components in quantitative research or vice-versa.

The **web surveys** played triangulation, embedded, explanatory and exploratory roles. The first subscribe survey helped recruit research participants among the volunteers for the second follow-up survey, interviews, and focus groups with volunteers (explanatory). The data from the subscribe survey and the focus group with the volunteers informed the development of the follow-up survey instrument and the guides for the interviews with the staff and for the focus groups with host organizations (exploratory). Data from the subscribe survey was also used during the interviews and focus groups with program staff, volunteers, and local partners as a point of discussion, meaning that research participants were asked to comment on the data (embedded procedure). The follow-up survey itself included both closed and open-ended questions (validating quantitative data triangulation).

The main purpose of the **interviews** was to allow comparisons across populations and to provide the flexibility to ask clarifying questions. Interviews with Bulgarians aimed to yield in-depth data on the in-country development perspectives, while interviews with Americans aimed to shed light on the U.S. development perspectives. Then the purpose of **focus groups** was to draw comparisons between individual and group development perspectives. I transformed qualitative data from both interviews and focus groups into quantitative data during the analysis stage to allow comparisons with the survey data (data transformation triangulation).

The use of **participant observation** in this study had a complimentary application as I was able to observe only two of three Peace Corps/Bulgaria legacy organizations. This method allowed drawing comparisons between the official and everyday development discourse of the organizations, as well as an assessment of the strength of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria legacy within each organization.

Lastly, **archival research** helped collect Peace Corps/Bulgaria program related documents and statistics (public documents and studies) to inform the official U.S. and Bulgarian development perspective and to contextualize the history of Peace Corps/Bulgaria. Archival data also served the purpose of validating primary data gathered through the surveys, interviews, and focus groups (triangulation).

Data Sources and Methods

The physical location of the data sources was in multiple sites around the world with concentration of research participants (primary data sources), as well as public documents (secondary and tertiary data sources) in Washington, D.C. and Sofia, Bulgaria. Data was collected on site (or face-to-face) during three separate field trips: (1) pre-dissertation research

trip to Sofia, Bulgaria in March 2013, (2) field work in Washington, D.C. in March 2014, and (3) field work in Bulgaria between May and September 2014, including in Bansko, Burgas, Elhovo, Gabrovo, Garmen, Karlovo, Malko Tarnovo, Sofia, Varvara, and Veliko Tarnovo. In addition, data was collected through the Internet (e-mail and Skype), and by phone.

Primary Data Sources (Surveys, Interviews, Focus Groups, Participant Observation)

Four primary data sources include information collected from different actors in the Peace Corps/Bulgaria partnership structure: (1) local program staff; (2) volunteers; (3) local partners (or representatives of host organizations and communities); and (4) legacy organizations. Together, these data capture the development discourse of those actors and of processes of identification, knowledge construction, and power configurations. The presentation of the primary data sources is organized by type of actor rather than by data collection method because the choice of method was of secondary importance to obtaining data from a specific type of actor. Also, the data collection methods were designed to capture the same type of data. Here, I list and explain the components of each primary data source.

Program Staff: I identified a list of all 49 individuals who served in program-related positions with Peace Corps/Bulgaria: Country Directors, Associate Peace Corps Directors for Programming and Training (APCDs, formerly Program and Training Officers), Program Managers, Program Assistants, and other program related Coordinators such as PCR Coordinators, External Resources Coordinators, the PEPHAR Coordinator, and the Community Outreach Coordinator.⁵² Two of those individuals were deceased at the time of the research and another five were unreachable, leaving a target population of 43 individuals including 14

⁵² I excluded the individuals who were served only as Training Manager, Training Assistants, or as Language/Cross-Cultural Coordinators from the sample because those positions supported the work of the programming staff.

Americans and 29 Bulgarians. Of those, **a total of 35 individuals** – 11 Americans and 24 Bulgarians - agreed to participate in **interviews**⁵³ (see APPENDIX A: Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews with the Program Staff). The interviews were conducted in the period between March and November 2014 at times, locations/mode, and language chosen by the interviewees, including face-to-face (17 in Bulgaria and 3 in the U.S.), over Skype (10), on the phone (four), and over e-mail (one). Face-to-face interviews were done at cafés (13), at workplaces (five), and public parks (two), whereas during Skype and phone interviews participants were either at their workplaces or homes. From all interviews 32 were done in English language and only three in Bulgarian language. The average duration was 55 min, with the shortest interview lasting 25 min and the longest lasting one hour and 40 min. In total, I gathered 31 hours and 15 min of interviews with the program staff.

Altogether, the response rate for the program staff is 81% including representatives from all program positions and all program sectors with some individuals having served in multiple program staff positions over the course of their careers. Nine of the program staff members were interviewed in their dual actor capacity: as a program staff and because of their affiliation with a legacy organization. An overview of the response rates for Program Staff participants by position and citizenship is shown in Table 10. For individuals with dual Bulgarian and U.S. citizenship I have counted the first citizenship (their natural born rather than naturalized citizenship).

⁵³ Of the 35 interviews, 34 were semi-structured formal interviews and one was an informal interview over e-mail.

Table 10: Response Rate for Program Staff Research Participants by Position and Citizenship

Program Staff Research Participants	No. All	No. Target	No. Interviewed	Response Rate
<i>Position</i>				
Country Director	10	8	8	100%
APCD – Programming & Training	5	5	3	60%
TEFL Program Manager	7	6	5	83%
TEFL Program Assistant	6	5	4	80%
SBD/CED Program Manager	5	4	4	100%
SBD/CED Program Assistant	4	4	4	100%
ENV Program Manager	3	3	2	67%
ENV Program Assistant	2	2	1	50%
COD Program Manager	1	1	1	100%
COD Program Assistant	2	2	1	50%
YD Program Manager	3	3	2	67%
YD Program Assistant	3	3	3	100%
PCR Coordinator	2	2	2	100%
External Resources Coordinator	4	3	3	100%
Other	2	2	2	100%
<i>Citizenship</i>				
US	16	14	11	79%
BG	33	29	24	83%
Total	49	43	35	81%

Volunteers: Collecting data from the Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) presented a particular challenge because of Peace Corps’ policy to protect the contact information of volunteers. Since there are online social media groups of Peace Corps/Bulgaria volunteers, I pursued a two-stage recruitment strategy for an online panel of volunteers. First, I invited volunteers to participate in the research by completing a “subscribe survey” that asked a few questions and allowed interested volunteers to provide contact information for a follow-up data collection (a more detailed web-based survey, a Skype interview or a focus group in Washington, D.C. or Sofia, Bulgaria). In addition, volunteer participants identified as key informants were approached directly to participate in the research (See APPENDIX B: Volunteer Survey

Methodology). Altogether, volunteer data was collected from a total of **155 volunteers** through the following methods with some volunteers participating in more than one method:

- **Online Subscribe Survey** with 152 PCVs conducted in the August 2013-April 2014 period (See APPENDIX C: RPCV Subscribe Survey Questionnaire);
- **Online Follow-up Survey** with 76 PCVs conducted in November 2014, including one PCV that did not participate in the subscribe survey (See APPENDIX D: RPCV Follow-up Survey Questionnaire).
- **Focus Group** in Washington, D.C. with three PCVs in March 2014 that lasted one hour and 25 min. The discussion was conducted in the private meeting room of a café. The main purpose of this focus group was to prepare the follow-up survey (see APPENDIX E: Guide for Focus Group with Volunteers). I also tried to organize a focus group with volunteers living in Sofia, Bulgaria but this was unsuccessful due to time conflicts of the volunteers. Instead I interviewed available volunteers individually;
- **Interviews** with **eight PCVs**⁵⁴, including two PCVs that were recruited outside of the subscribe survey (See APPENDIX F: Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews with Volunteers). As with the program staff, volunteers chose the time and locations/mode for the interviews resulting in face-to-face interviews in Washington, D.C. (on formal and one informal), in Sofia, Bulgaria (three), in Varvara, Bulgaria (one), and through Skype (one formal and one informal) in the March – July 2014 period. Face-to-face interviews were done at cafés (two), at workplaces (one), and homes (two), whereas during Skype interviews volunteers were at their homes. The average duration of recorded interviews was 54 min, with the shortest interview lasting 37 min and the longest interview lasting 1

⁵⁴ Of the eight interviews, six were semi-structured formal interviews and two were informal interviews (one in person and one over Skype). Also, one of the volunteers was interviewed together with her spouse, who served as her counterpart.

hour and 12 min, although one of the volunteers was interviewed over two separate sessions for a total of two hours. In total, I gathered six hours and 20 min of interviews with volunteers. All volunteers who participated in the interviews had a special volunteer status in that they fitted more than one actor category: five of the volunteers had served in a leadership capacity with one or more of the legacy organizations under study; one volunteer had a dual volunteer-program staff status having returned in the country as a temporary technical training staff member; one married her Bulgarian counterpart, and one was a naturalized U.S. citizen from Bulgaria.

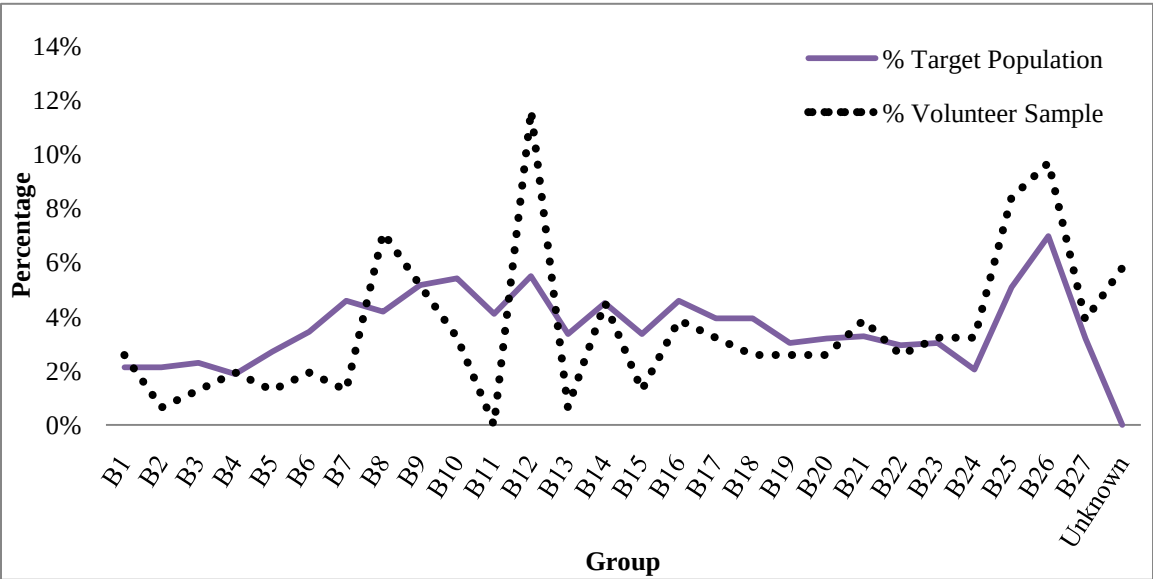
The selection of volunteers was based on two target population frames: (1) all 1,220 sworn-in volunteers⁵⁵ and (2) all 120 sworn-in volunteers who had extended their service for more than two years (2+ PCVs). Thus, with a total of 155 participating volunteers, including 66 2+PCVs, the response rate for the volunteers is 13% for the target population of sworn-in volunteers and 55% for the target population of 2+PCVs.⁵⁶ Figure 12 compares the percentage of volunteers for each group of the 27 groups that were sent to Bulgaria to the percentage of volunteers from those groups in the sample. The data indicates that the sample under-represents and over-represents some of the groups. For example, the sample does not include volunteers from the B11 group but has more volunteers from the B12 group.⁵⁷ At the same time, as shown in Figure 13, the sample reflects well the distribution of volunteers by sector programs.

⁵⁵ Volunteers in Bulgaria were sworn-in and begin their service with their host organizations after successful completion of 10 to 12 weeks of in-country PST.

⁵⁶ This is a conservative estimate of the response rate because the target population numbers include an undetermined number of diseased and unreachable volunteers.

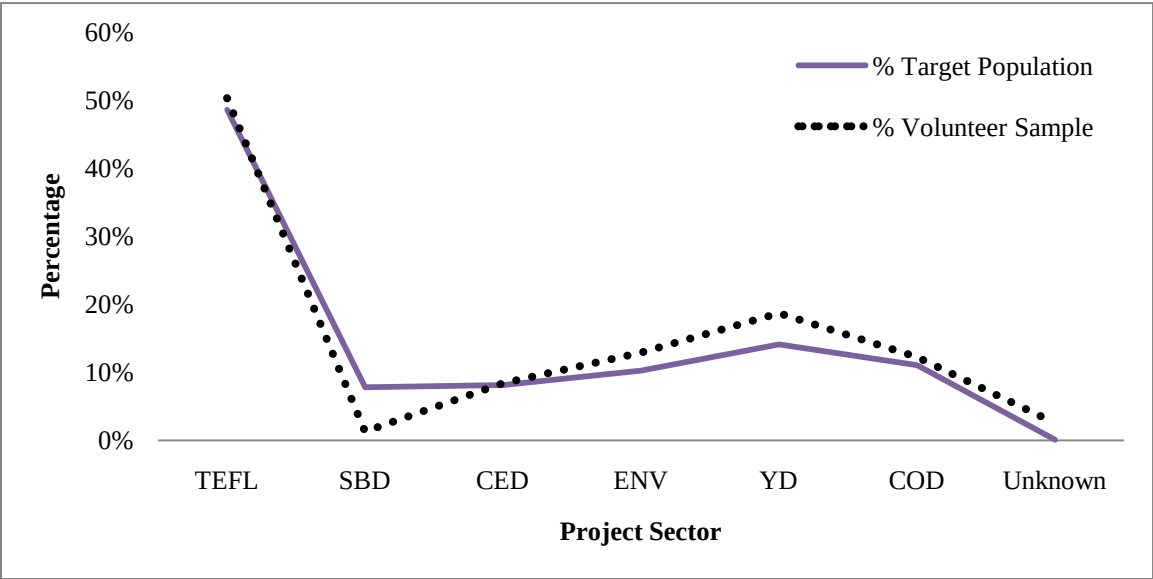
⁵⁷ The overrepresentation of the B12 group is a result of the design of the survey which included an incentive for participation in the form of a donation to two Peace Corps/Bulgaria legacy organizations, both of which are affiliated with B12 PCVs.

Figure 12: Response Rate for Volunteer Research Participants by Group



Note: Target population (N=1,200; Volunteer sample (n=155)

Figure 13: Response Rate for Volunteer Research Participants by Project Sector



Note: Target population (N=1,200; Volunteer sample (n=155)

Local Partners: I collected data from a total of **32 local partners**, including 18 counterparts,⁵⁸ from 22 different host organizations through *six focus groups* and *four interviews* (see APPENDIX G: Guide for Focus Groups with Local Partners/Host Organizations). Purposeful or judgmental sampling strategies identified the focus groups since Peace Corps failed to provide a list of host organizations per my Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. This type of sampling is a matter of judgment as to which cases are most appropriate when there is no list of population elements and or in view of some theoretical considerations (Blaikie 2010:178). Initially, I planned to organize five focus groups in different types of communities (the capital, regional center, and municipal center) and with organizations who had partnered with volunteers from different years and sector programs. During my fieldwork, however, on-the-ground practicalities limited some of the in-depth discussions with some focus groups, while presenting opportunities for the organizations of substitute focus groups and additional/unanticipated interviews with local partners. A summary of the planned and additional focus groups and interviews with representatives of host organizations is available in Table 11, while a map of their location, in Figure 14.

The changes in the sampling strategy improved rather than biased the overall focus group research findings. They increased the number of represented host organizations from 11 to 22, which ensured that all major types of host organizations were represented by adding municipal administrations, a greater variety of schools and NGOs, and a business center established by Peace Corps. The addition of focus groups and interviews also increased the representation of different types of host communities from five to 14 different sites and from three to 11 regions.

⁵⁸ The other research participants knew the PCVs as their colleagues (four) or Bulgarian language tutor (one). One of the focus groups participants knew Peace Corps volunteers from Romania but had not interacted with the volunteer who worked for his organization. Therefore, I have excluded the contributions of this participant from the analysis.

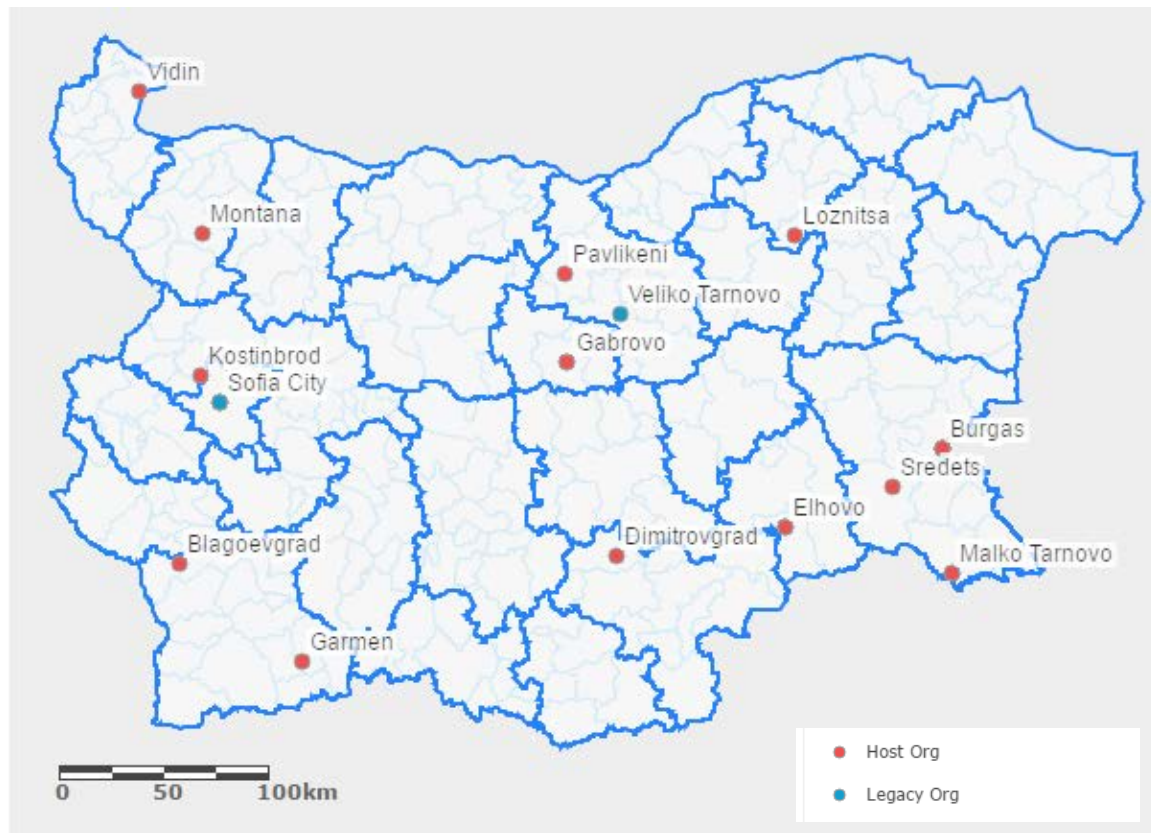
Table 11: Data Collection with Representatives of Host Organizations

Location/Site	Type of Site	No. HO invited	No. HO present	Type of HO	No. Reps present
Planned Focus Groups					
1. Sofia	Capital	31	1	NGO	2
2. Burgas	Regional Center	11	5	NGO (3) School (2)	4 at focus group; 1 as interview (a)
3. Elhovo	Municipal Center	5	3	Business Center (1) Cultural Center (1) NGO (1)	3 (b)
4. Malko Tarnovo	Municipal Center	1	2	Cultural Center (1) Park (1)	4
* Sliven	Regional Center	1	-	-	-
Additional Focus Groups					
* Gabrovo	Regional Center	5	2	Municipality (1) NGO (1)	2 as interviews (c)
5. Garmen	Village Municipal Center	3	2	Municipality (1)	3
6. Spelling Bee Camp (d)	2 Regional Centers & 4 Municipal Centers	6	6	NGO (1) School (5)	6
Additional Interviews					
Sofia	Municipal Center	n/a	1	NGO (1)	1 (a)
Sofia	Regional Center	n/a	1	Business Center (1)	2 (e)

Notes:

- (a) One of the Burgas focus group representatives was unable to attend the meeting and asked to be interviewed individually. This person had served as a counterpart for two PCVs in two different communities (Burgas and Sredets) with two different organizations. The interview took place in Sofia.
- (b) One of the Elhovo focus group participants had served as a counterpart for two PCVs in two different organizations in the same community.
- (c) The focus group in Gabrovo was an attempt to substitute for the failed focus group in Sliven. The two individuals who expressed an interest to participate in the research asked to be interviewed individually.
- (d) This was an opportune focus group that occurred during my participant observation with the CORPluS Foundation during their annual Spelling Bee Camp near Bansko. Six of the teacher participants at the camp were former counterparts and agreed to participate in an ad-hoc focus group during their free time. They were from host organizations in Blagoevgrad, Dimitrograd, Montana, Loznitsa, Kostinbrod, and Pavlikeni
- (e) This was an opportune interview as I literally bumped into the volunteer on the streets of Sofia, while she was visiting with a fellow Peace Corps program staff member (who introduced us). The volunteer had completed the subscribe survey and agreed to be interviewed with her spouse who was also her former Bulgarian counterpart in Vidin.

Figure 14: Map of Host Communities of Local Partner Research Participants



All focus groups were conducted in Bulgarian and lasted on average one hour and 15 min, with the shortest focus group lasting 45 min (Sofia) and the longest focus group lasting one hour and 40 min (Garmen and Malko Tarnovo), for a total of seven hours and 22 min of focus groups discussions with local partners. Two of the interviews were conducted in Bulgarian and two in English. They lasted 44 min on average, with the shortest one lasting 27 min and the longest one lasting one hour, for a total of three hours of interviews with local counterparts. The data was collected between May and September 2014.

Legacy Organizations: Purposive or judgmental sampling for the legacy organizations identified three organizations that also self-identified as Peace Corps/Bulgaria legacy organizations: (1) **The GLOW Association**, established in 2004 to continue the Camp GLOW

(Girls Leading Our World) PCV initiative in Bulgaria with the support of the fiscal sponsorship of the European Information Center in Veliko Tarnovo; (2) **The Areté Youth Foundation**, established in 2005 by PCVs to support high-potential Roma youth in Bulgaria and the Balkans located in Sofia; and (3) **The CORPluS Foundation**, established in 2012 by former Peace Corps Staff to advance the work and goals established by Peace Corps/Bulgaria located also in Sofia. All three legacy organizations were also host organizations. The GLOW Association worked with multiple volunteers (a minimum of 11) hosted by its fiscal sponsor – the European Information Center in Veliko Tarnovo – and other host organization in Veliko Tarnovo. The Areté Youth Foundation hosted a PCR Volunteer in 2011. The CORPluS Foundation hosted a B25 COD volunteer who helped establish the organization. In this sense, the three legacy organizations represent a special sub-sample within the sample of host organizations. Altogether, a total of **17 legacy organization representatives** participated in the research, including six Americans and 11 Bulgarians. Further, Table 12 shows that 13 of those individuals had dual-actor research status having also served as Peace Corp/Bulgaria program staff (seven), volunteers (five), and/or as a non-legacy host organization representative (one).

Table 12: Number of Research Participants by Legacy Organization, Actor Status, and Citizenship

Legacy Organization	Actor					Citizenship		
	Staff	PCV	HO	LO	Total	US	BG	Total
The GLOW Association	-	2	1	-	2	2	2	4
The Areté Youth Foundation	3	4	-	3	10	5	5	10
The CORPluS Foundation	4	1	1	-	6	1	5	6
Total	7	5 (a)	1 (b)	3	17	6 (c)	11 (d)	17

Notes:

- (a) Two of the PCVs had associations with both GLOW and Areté;
- (b) One of the local partners had associations with both GLOW and CORPluS;
- (c) Two of the US participants had associations with both GLOW and Areté;
- (d) One of the BG participants had associations with both GLOW and CORPluS.

Three different data collection methods yielded detailed information on the work of those organizations:

- **14 Interviews**⁵⁹ with **14** representatives including three who had connections to two of the legacy organizations.⁶⁰ Representatives include current and past board members, staff, fiscal sponsors, and/or founding volunteers (volunteers who helped establish the legacy organization or the Peace Corps legacy project that the organization had taken over). I used the program staff, volunteer, or counterpart interview guides as appropriate.
- **1 Focus group** with **three** representatives of the Areté Youth Foundation (all current staff members). The purpose of the focus group was to discuss preliminary findings from my research. The focus group was conducted in Bulgarian and lasted 50 min. All participants were different from the interview participants.
- **Participant observation** with the Areté Youth Foundation and the CORPluS Foundation. I spent two months observing the day-to-day management of the Areté Youth Foundation, while using their office as my work station during my field research in Sofia, Bulgaria in the May – June, 2014 period. I also attended one of their youth camps in the Karlovo area for two days in August 2014. Then, with the CORPluS Foundation my participant observation involved serving as a volunteer camp trainer for their one-week 2014 National Spelling Bee Camp in July 2014. In addition, during my pre-dissertation visit, I served as a monitor for three one-day Spelling Bee Competitions in Burgas in March 2013.

⁵⁹ Of the 14 interviews, 12 were semi-structured formal interviews (nine in person and three over Skype) and two were informal interviews (one in person and one over Skype).

⁶⁰ Two representatives had connections to both the GLOW Association (fiscal sponsors) and the Areté Youth Foundation (board members/staff) and a third representative had connections to both the GLOW Association (fiscal sponsor) and the CORPluS Foundation (board member).

Altogether my research involved 222 research participants: 35 program staff, 155 volunteers, and 32 local partners from 26 host organizations including three legacy organizations. A description of the types of primary data formats (data collection method) by sources (type of research participant) is included as Table 27: Tables Summary of Primary Data Sources in APPENDIX I: Tables.

Secondary and Tertiary Data Sources (Archival Research)

A list of all secondary and tertiary data public data sources that were used as units of analysis is available as APPENDIX H. They relate to the circumstances surrounding the opening, operation, and closure of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program and represent the official development discourse by and between the U.S. government/Peace Corps and the Bulgarian government. Below is a brief description of the six types of public document sources that comprise the data from the archival research:

- **Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentations/Justifications:** These documents are prepared annually by Peace Corps headquarters to justify the annual budget request to the U.S. Congress for the coming fiscal year (FY). For my analysis I used all 22 documents between 1992 and 2013, which include an overview of the operation of Peace Corps in Bulgaria. The documents were downloaded from the Peace Corps website.
- **Peace Corps/Bulgaria Legal Documents:** These include a total of seven legal documents about the legal basis of operation of Peace Corps in Bulgaria: the *Country Agreement* between the U.S. and the Bulgarian governments for the establishment of the Peace Corps mission in Bulgaria, a sample of four *Framework Agreements* between different ministries of the Bulgarian government and Peace Corps/Bulgaria that specify

the parameters of separate sector programs, and a sample of two *Memorandum of Understandings* (MoUs) between local host organizations and Peace Corps/Bulgaria that specify the terms for the volunteer placements in those organizations. All documents were provided by the Peace Corps/Bulgaria office during my pre-dissertation research visit in March 2013.

- **Peace Corps/Bulgaria Welcome Books:** A sample of five welcome books prepared by the Peace Corps/Bulgaria office for the new volunteers who arrived in 2002, 2003, 2007, 2008, and 2009. Those were provided by Peace Corps in response to my FOIA request in September 2013.
- **Studies on Peace Corps/Bulgaria:** Seven studies about the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program including the 1994 U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) study on the new Peace Corps countries in the former Eastern Bloc countries, the 2003 SPA program impact evaluation, the 2007 *Project Plan Survey*, 2009 *Host Country Impact Study*, the 2009 and 2010 *Annual Volunteer Surveys*, and the 2011 *Impact Sheets*. The GAO study is available online and the other studies were provided either by Peace Corps in response to my FOIA request in September 2013 or by Peace Corps/Bulgaria staff members in the summer of 2014.
- **Peace Corps/Bulgaria Legacy Documents:** These include 11 public documents concerning the 20th Anniversary of Peace Corps in Bulgaria in 2011 and the legacy celebrations preceding the closure of the program in 2013. All documents were provided by the Peace Corps/Bulgaria office during my pre-dissertation visit in March 2013 or posted on the “Peace Corps Bulgaria” Facebook page at the closure of the program in August 2013.

- **Peace Corps/Bulgaria Volunteer and Site Placement Statistics:** Incomplete list of volunteers with information about the name, assignment, start and end service dates was provided in response to my FOIA request in June 2013. Another incomplete list of volunteers with the name, group, sector assignment, and site placement information (community and host organization) was provided by a former Peace Corps/Bulgaria staff member in March 2015.

DATA REDUCTION AND ANALYSIS

Bottom-Up and Top-Down Approaches

The specifics of the primary and secondary/tertiary data lent themselves to different analytical approaches. The public development discourse of the Peace Corps/U.S. government and the Bulgarian government expressed in the secondary and tertiary data was well-suited for a top-down analytical approach (meso level of analysis). The personal reflections by Peace Corps actors expressed in the primary data represented the private development discourse and were well-suited for a bottom-up analytical approach (micro level of analysis).

Further, the use of mixed data collection methods generated both quantitative and qualitative data as shown in Table 13. This required the use of two separate tools of analysis. All qualitative data was analyzed using *NVivo10* data software. All quantitative survey data was analyzed using *Survey Monkey*⁶¹ and *Excel*⁶² data software. The main reason for choosing NVivo among a variety of data management software was because of its support for a multi-method study design (Bandara 2006) including the integration of survey data collected with Survey

⁶¹ I used the Gold plan, which allowed real-time results, custom reporting and filter and cross-tabbing features for preliminary analysis, and download of the survey data into Excel files.

⁶² I used the Microsoft Office Excel 2007 version with the Data Analysis ToolPak Add-In.

Monkey. The latter was the software that I used to create and manage my web surveys with the volunteers. I used Excel for the statistical analysis and for the creation of data charts.⁶³

Table 13: Type of Collected Data

Type of Data	Quantitative (numbers)	Qualitative (text)
Primary	Web surveys: closed Qs	Web surveys: open Qs Interview Transcriptions Focus Group Transcriptions Participant Observation Notes
Secondary	Public Documents	Public Documents
Tertiary	Studies about Peace Corps/Bulgaria	Studies about Peace Corps/Bulgaria

Qualitative Data: Development Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is rooted in the disciplines of linguistics and social science and is used more generally to mean the study of language (as well as visual images) as an element of social life (Fairclough 2003). Since the 1970s and 1980s when it began to develop as a separate field many different traditions of discourse analysis have emerged in a variety of disciplines (Phillips and Hardy 2002). According to Nederveen Pieterse (2010), the use of discourse analysis in development studies is premised on the awareness that development is not simply a theory or a policy but that in either form it is a *discourse* or an epistemology. It is concerned with the process of knowledge production. As an analytical instrument, however, discourse analysis can be applied in different ways. It can be used as an ideological platform to critique development as an ideology, a story that constructs social relations including power relations. Or it can be applied to unmask development as “only a story,” only a narrative. Or it can be used as both an ideology critique and a narrative analysis. The main point is that:

⁶³ I did not need to use professional statistical software such as SPSS or STATA because my quantitative data did not allow complex statistical analysis.

The methodological gain of discourse analysis is to add a level of reflexivity, theoretical refinement and sophistication to development studies, and thus to open up the politics of development to a more profound engagement. The weakness and limitation – in development studies just as in literature criticism and cultural studies – is that it may skirt around the actual issues of power. (Nederveen Pieterse 2010:15)

Since the units of my analysis are development texts and personal reflections on Peace Corps as a development practice (including the respondents reflections on their own involvement in this practice) and the extent to which this practice has engendered processes of neoliberalization and counter-neoliberalization that support certain power relations, my use of discourse analysis is closer to a an ideology critique. This form of discourse analysis is also known as “critical discourse analysis” (CDA). In contrast to “descriptive discourse analysis” the goal of which is to describe how language works in order to understand it, the goal of CDA is “...to speak to and, perhaps, intervene in, social or political issues, problems, and controversies in the world” (Gee 2011:9). Further, there are many different approaches in the application of CDA with some focusing on the “content” of the language being used (the themes and issues being discussed) and others focusing on the “structure” of the language (the grammar and the semantics). My application of development discourse analysis offers a “content” approach to CDA.

The analysis of data itself involves the use of coding as a technique of analysis. The transcriptions⁶⁴ of interviews and focus groups, answers to open-ended questions from the surveys and other text data were read and coded into categories, themes and topics informed by the conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2 and the post-socialist context for international development volunteering discussed in Chapter 3 (see Table 28: Coding Instrument in

⁶⁴ I transcribed and translated all interviews and focus group recordings with the help of GearPlayer4 software.

APPENDIX I: Tables). I used three **conceptual categories**: *conceptions of neoliberalism*, *neoliberal voluntarism*, and *counter-neoliberal voluntarism*, which covered nine themes (three themes per category) and 33 topics including the different *neoliberal manifestations* according to the main theoretical approaches and conceptualizations of neoliberalism (13 topics under neoliberal policies, neoliberal project/ideology, and neoliberal governance) and the different *mechanisms for neoliberalization and counter-neoliberalization through voluntarism* (10 mechanisms for neoliberal voluntarism and 10 mechanisms for counter-neoliberal voluntarism under the themes of values/goals, practices, and subjectivity).

I also used three **contextual categories**: *post-socialism* and *Peace Corps*, which covered six topics under two themes including the different *goals of the post-socialist transformation* (transition to democracy and market economy, and European integration) and the *three Core Peace Corps Goals* (technical assistance through skill transfer and capacity building and cross-cultural exchange). This approach is known as ***focused coding*** because the coding is done “...on the basis of topics that have been identified as of particular interest” (Emerson et al. 1995:143). In NVivo, codes can be created before and/or during the exploration of the data. Since, I had a list of specific categories, themes, and topics that I was looking for I first used the Text Search queries function⁶⁵ to gather all related content and then explored those further for more detailed coding. I also used auto-coding to gather all answers to the same questions from the surveys, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups.

In addition to *focused coding* I utilized ***open coding***, which involves the coding for common themes that emerge from the data with an eye towards identifying what could become

⁶⁵ “Text Search Query” in a search for a word or phrase in your source material that allows the viewing of all the matches in a preview node – to automatically code the content – or as a word tree to visualize words in context. Source: QSR International n.d. *NVivo10 Getting Started Guide*. Retrieved October 29, 2015 (<http://download.qsrinternational.com/Document/NVivo10/NVivo10-Getting-Started-Guide.pdf>).

the basis for categorization (Emerson et al. 1995:152). Here, I used the Word Frequency function,⁶⁶ which compiled a list of the most frequently occurring words in select data and I also created new codes as I explored the data. A total of two additional themes became apparent:

- The theme of *First-Second-Third World consciousness*, related to assessments of Bulgaria's development vis-à-vis the U.S. and the rest of the world.
- The theme of *development awareness*, related to the presence of awareness of development actors about their involvement in processes of neoliberalization and/or counter-neoliberalization, as well as the timing of this awareness (i.e. before, during, or after Peace Corps service).

One of the advantages of using coding software like NVivo, rather than doing the coding manually, is that it allows the comparison of data by certain criteria with the creation of source and node classifications⁶⁷ that link background information about the research participants to the data. I developed three types of source classifications. The first includes *demographic data*: age (year of birth), gender, race/ethnicity, highest education degree, field of study, and citizenship. The second focuses on the *Peace Corps profile* of the participants: position, sector program association, period of association (years from -to), length of association (number of years), and association to legacy organization(s). The third captured information about the *data collection process*: method, mode, location, and language of data collection. With those source

⁶⁶ "Word Frequency Query" creates a list of the most frequently occurring words in the sources and visualize the results in a word cloud, tree map or cluster analysis diagram. Source: Source: QSR International n.d. *NVivo10 Getting Started Guide*. Retrieved October 29, 2015 (<http://download.qsrinternational.com/Document/NVivo10/NVivo10-Getting-Started-Guide.pdf>).

⁶⁷ "Source classifications" and "Node classifications" allow the recording of information about the sources and nodes such as the demographic details of the people, places or other cases in the project. Source: Source: QSR International. n.d. *NVivo10 Getting Started Guide*. Retrieved October 29, 2015 (<http://download.qsrinternational.com/Document/NVivo10/NVivo10-Getting-Started-Guide.pdf>).

classifications I could run Matrix Coding Queries⁶⁸ to compare nodes by specific demographic, Peace Corps profile, or data collection attribute.

Quantitative Data: Descriptive Statistics

Closed-ended questions from the surveys and numerical data about Peace Corps/Bulgaria (such as number of volunteers, staff, host organizations, etc.) represent the quantitative data. In addition, some qualitative data from the interviews and focus groups was converted into quantitative data to allow comparison between the perceptions of different actor groups. All quantitative data was analyzed with descriptive statistics (frequency distributions). The use of other methods that include statistical inference and significance testing was inappropriate given that the data was collected through non-probability sampling (Blaikie 2010:181) and the small sample sizes.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND DATA COLLECTION CHALLENGES

Participatory Research as a Problem-Management Strategy

The application of my complex case study research design, presented challenges in each of the areas that are considered advantages of the case study including that:

1. It permits the grounding of observations and concepts about social action and social structures in **natural settings studies** at close hand;
2. It provides information from a number of sources and over a period of time, thus permitting a more **holistic study of complex social networks** and of complexes of social action and social meaning;

⁶⁸ “Matrix Coding Query” creates a matrix of nodes based on search criteria (QSR International. n.d.)

3. It can furnish the dimensions of time and history to the study of social life, thereby enabling the investigator to examine **continuity and change in lifeworld patterns**.
4. It encourages and facilitate, in practice, **theoretical innovation and generalization**.
(Feagin et al. 1991:6 -7, emphasis mine)

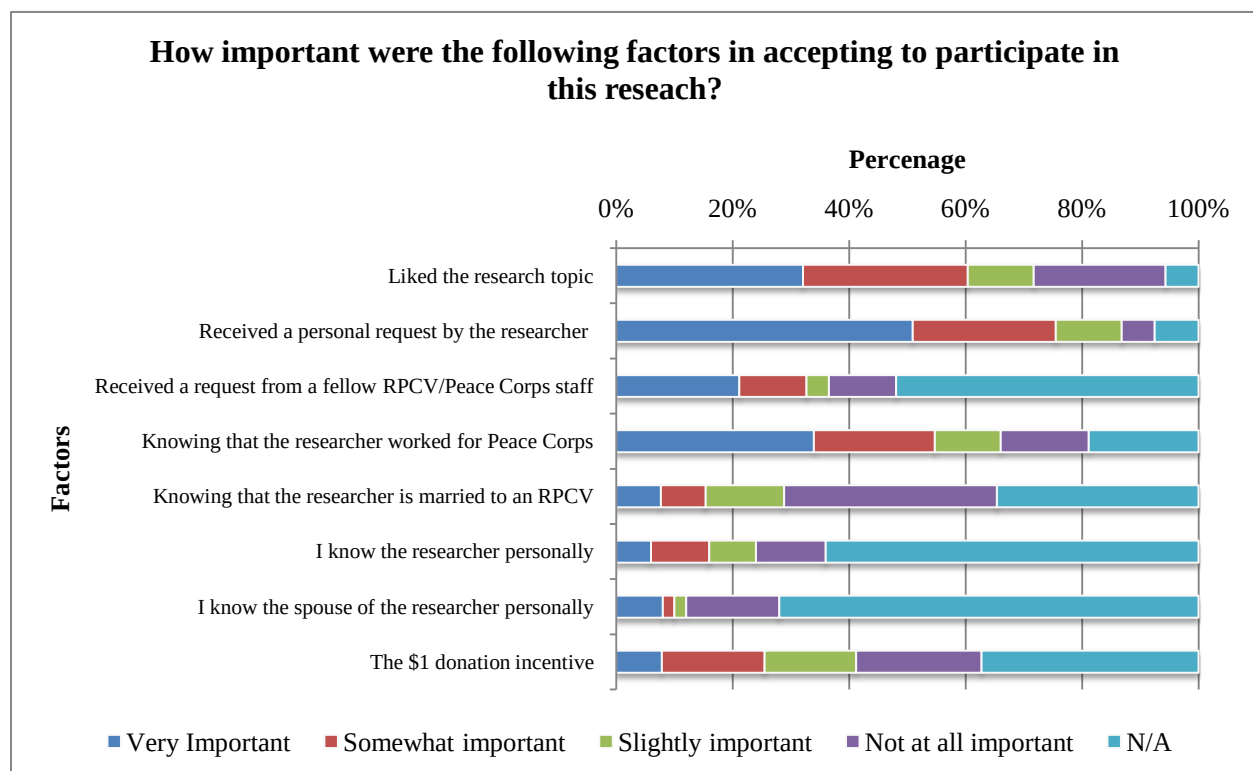
My strategy for dealing with many of those challenges was to adopt a participatory approach in the research process. This means that research participants were included in all phases of the research: starting with the inception, design, implementation, write-up, and the dissemination of the results. My application is different from the “participatory action research” which seeks to empower participants to take control over the research or “emancipatory research” which aims to benefit the disadvantaged groups that are the subject of the research (Babbie 2010).

Access to Complex Social Networks

My access to the Peace Corps/Bulgaria network was facilitated by my insider status as a former part-time Peace Corps/Bulgaria employee in the 2001 – 2004 period and as a Bulgaria B14 RPCV spouse. Thus, I share Peace Corps experiences with some of the informants from the 2001-2004 period: Peace Corps staff who were my colleagues at the time (including some who were my direct supervisors), volunteers who were my trainees and those who served in the country at the time, and counterparts who worked with volunteers who were my trainees including some who served as the counterparts of my spouse (my spouse chose not to participate in the research). This status influenced the research in a number of ways. First of all, it is related to the development of relationships of trust and the participation rates among program staff, the volunteers, and counterparts. In my follow-up survey with the volunteers I asked specifically

how my insider status has influenced their decision to accept to participate. The data in Figure 15 shows that 34% of the respondents considered my Peace Corps employee history a “Very important” factor. Then, while only 6% felt that knowing me personally was a “Very important” factor, personal connections with members of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria partnership structure were important in asking people who knew me to introduce or connect me to people that I did not know personally.

Figure 15: Volunteer Perceptions on Factors for Research Participation, n=53



Secondly, my insider status concerns the possibility of influence in my understanding of the Peace Corps experiences of research participants, which is mediated not only by my Peace Corps insider status but my social position as a female researcher, a Bulgarian who had left the country in 2005, a U.S. citizen since 2012, etc. This was a particular concern for data obtained in

Bulgarian language that I translated into English. To avoid this influence I offered to e-mail the interview and focus group transcripts to research participants so that they can make corrections. In addition, respondent validation of the interpretation of the data findings was sought by sharing preliminary analysis and draft papers with the research participants (Silverman 2000).

Missing Data

The main challenge here concerns the processing of my Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request by Peace Corps, which was developed with the help of Peace Corps/Bulgaria program staff. I was provided either incomplete sets of public documents that covered only some rather than all years of the operation of Peace Corps in Bulgaria or the documents were released after I had completed my analysis or not at all. As a member of Peace Corps/Bulgaria Facebook groups I could ask and received help in filling in missing information about people and places.

My research participants included program staff, volunteers and counterparts that covered the whole historical period under study. However, they vary in the distance of their Peace Corps experience to the time of data collection from one year to 20+ years. A possible criticism here is that since the individual-level data is based on memories, it is not reliable especially in the case of older informants. With regards to the possibility of factual errors, I have minimized that by triangulating data from multiple sources. More importantly, since I am interested in the perceptions of the different actors on the development process, the capturing of subjective interpretations of historical processes is an important aspect of the study. Still, in order to better understand the possible influence of time on the reconstructions and interpretations of individual

Peace Corps experiences I have compared how answers vary by the distance of the respondents to their Peace Corps experience (years of service) and by length of association (number of years).

Mixing Data Methods

The data for this research was collected from different sources and with the use of different methods, which also means that the data came from two out of four possible different types of settings: natural, semi-natural, artificial setting and from a non-setting (Blaikie 2010). The data from individuals collected through surveys, interviews and focus groups was collected in a semi-natural setting. The public documents and official statistics are all social artifacts and thus came from a non-setting (their collection did not involve a situation created by me). The mixing of data obtained from the participants' knowledge, perceptions and experience, and from social artifacts pose a methodological challenge in separating the social constructions of the social actors from the sociological constructions of the scientist (Blaikie 2010:171).

My strategy for addressing this challenge was to be very explicit about the sociological constructions that I used in my research by sharing the definitions of key concepts including what I mean when I say neoliberalism. Alternatively, whenever a research participant referred to a sociological concept that was part of my analytical framework I inquired about the exact meaning that is being attached to. The latter was possible during interviews and focus groups, but not with the web surveys, which included my definitions for the key concepts.

Generalizability and Theory Generation

The main two issues with the use of the case study design are whether the findings can be used to generalize and to generate and test theory (Blaikie 2010). When generalization is desired

then the preference is for use of “typical” cases, multiple-cases at different sites, “natural generalization” based on the provision of sufficient information on the context of the research to allow judgment whether or not the findings may be relevant to another context, “analytical generalization” when the findings from a case study are compared to a previously development theory, and selection of sample population that is similar to the target population.

When theory development is the priority, rather than the representativeness of the findings, case studies can be used on a continuum to support the development of an understanding (by providing a narrative account of the phenomenon) through theory building (analysis against a theoretical framework) and theory testing (using the findings to support or challenge theoretical conclusions). Blaikie (2010) notes that scholars concerned about theory testing from case studies have proposed the use of different logic for case selection compared to those concerned with generalizing from case studies: extreme, deviant or least likely cases instead of typical cases; logical inference or analytic generalization rather than statistical inference; and multiple- rather than single-case study design. To the extent that every theory aims to apply to many situations rather than particular cases, the issue of theory development and testing cannot be separated from the issue of generalizability (Hammersley et al 2000 in Blaikie 2010:197).

My research design suggests that the findings can be used to generalize about the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program and for theory building about the role of Peace Corps and of similar international development volunteer programs in processes of transition to complex interdependence. The findings are generalizable because while the data was collected through non-probability sampling methods they are representative of the target populations. Then, they can support the generation of theory because the case study focuses on both the historization and

contextualization of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program and because it compares the responses of different groups (actors) who participated in the research (Silverman 2000).

CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on describing the application of four main research strategies – actor-oriented case study, mixed sources and data collection methods, development discourse analysis, and the participatory approach in the research process – to the study of Peace Corps/Bulgaria for the purpose of explaining the role of international development volunteering in a post-socialist context. In combination these strategies supports generalization of the findings and theory building. In the following chapters I begin to answer the main research question starting with a basic profile of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program.

CHAPTER 5: THE PEACE CORPS/BULGARIA PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the main features of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria Program: the different types of volunteer assignments, the number and profile of volunteers, their training, the number and profile of the volunteer placements (the volunteers' host organizations and communities), and the profile of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria staff. This basic profile of the organization is framed with information about the opening of the program in 1991 and the decision to close to program in 2013.

THE OPENING OF THE PROGRAM

The opening of the Peace Corps program in Bulgaria was prepared over the course of two visits (Peace Corps 1992). The first delegation of Peace Corps staff to Bulgaria, led by Peace Corps Director Paul D. Coverdell, arrived on April 19, 1990 to seek general approval for the opening of the program. Then in September 1990, a second delegation of Peace Corps staff met with the Vice President, the Minister of Education, and the Minister of Agriculture to sign the Country Agreement and to decide on the specific sectors that the volunteers can assist with. The first volunteers arrived in June 1991 and Bulgaria became the fourth Eastern European Peace Corps country after Poland, Hungary, and then Czechoslovakia.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ Romania also accepted their first group of Volunteers in 1991 but the Country Agreement was signed in 1992. Source: PC. 2010. *Host Country Impact Study: Romania*. Retrieved October 29, 2015 (http://files.peacecorps.gov/multimedia/pdf/opengov/PC_Romania_Report.pdf).

VOLUNTEER ASSIGNMENTS

Between 1991 and 2013 the main sector projects in the country changed in number and scope, including the splitting and merging of some of the projects. Altogether, Bulgaria accepted volunteers in five sector projects. It started with English teaching as a first project in 1991, which split into separate Primary and Secondary Education projects between 2003 and 2008. The second project - Small Business Development – started in 1992 and evolved into a Community Economic Development project in 1997. The Environment project was launched in 1995. A project focusing on Youth Development opened in 2003, and a year later, in 2004, the Community Economic Development and Environment projects merged into the Community and Organizational Development project. Table 14 includes a summary of the main goals of the projects, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8.

In addition to the sector projects in 2010, Peace Corps/Bulgaria began accepting PCR volunteers to work on specific short-term projects (up to 12 months) in the areas of education, community, organizational and youth development, and special education. Many of the volunteers were also tasked to work with strategic legacy partners for the purpose of transitioning Peace Corps/Bulgaria resources and tools at the closure of the mission. At the time the PCR program accepted only RPCVs or volunteers who have already completed a regular 2-year service in any of the former or current Peace Corps countries worldwide, including RPCVs who have served in Bulgaria.

Table 14: Peace Corps Volunteer Assignments in Bulgaria

Sector Project	Goals
TEFL: Education (1991 – 2013)	• Improve the English language and communication skills in English of Bulgarian students, teachers and community members; • Contribute to the professional and personal development and increased competitiveness in the world market of Bulgarian youth and community members; and • Assist schools, institutions and minority groups in community development and capacity building
SBD: Small Business Development (1992 – 1996)	• To provide quality service to our clients. • To provide technical assistance to individuals and organizations in business, government and education. • To provide opportunities for education and training in the field of business administration. • To sponsor and participate in seminars, trade shows, and conferences on a consistent basis. • To conduct and collect research of local market conditions on a continuous basis for use by the Business Centers, Bulgarian business professionals, and cooperating organizations. • To incorporate the Business Centers as non-profit associations, and to become financially independent centers for the purpose of free enterprise development and education.
CED: Community Economic Development (1997 – 2004)	• Develop the capacity of district and municipal administrations and local NGOs to promote community economic development; • Promote community involvement in the economic development activities and enhance the development potential of the community; • Improve the quality of products and services of local entrepreneurs and enterprises and expand their business activities.
ENV: Environment Management & Training (1995 – 2004)	• Raise the overall level of environmental awareness of Bulgarian communities and improve their local environment; • Work toward enhancement and conservation of natural resources and develop and introduce practices for their sustainable use; • Improve the organizational capacity of local organizations which deal with environmental issues.
YD: Youth Development (2003 - 2013)	• Work directly with youth; • Build the capacity of youth service providers and youth-serving organizations; • Build parental and community support for youth development.
COD: Community & Organizational Development (2004 - 2013)	• Improve administrative capacity in local organizations; • Increase environmental awareness and involvement; • Improve ability to succeed in the market place.

Sources: PC/B Legacy Book; “About Project Enterprise” document from the archive of B4 SBD Pat McClung.

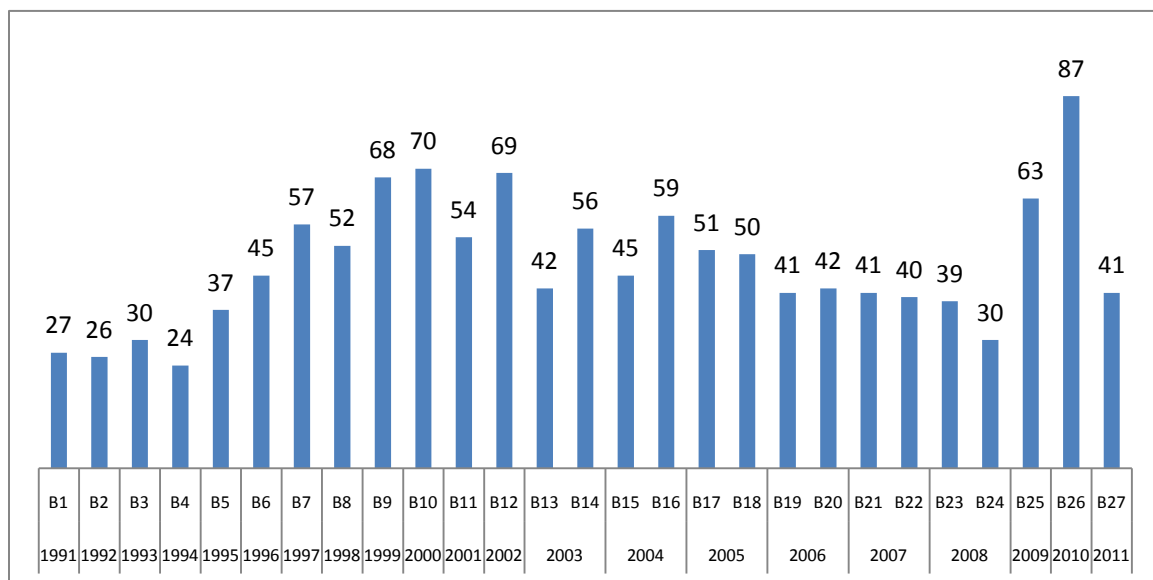
VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Types of Volunteers

Between 1991 and 2013, a total of 1,297 Americans came “to meet the needs for trained men and women” in the country. Among those were 1,286 individuals with a regular 2-year service assignment known as Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) and 21 individuals with a short-term PCR Assignment. Of the 21 PCR volunteers, ten were also Bulgaria RPCVs.⁷⁰

New volunteer groups arrived annually in the spring or summer months and are known as Bulgaria 1 group (B1), Bulgaria 2 group (B2), for a total of 27 B Groups (see Figure 16). There was one new group of volunteers per year, except between 2003 and 2008 when there were two new groups per year. PCR volunteers arrived at various times during the year and began their assignments immediately having already completed a PST being RPCVs.

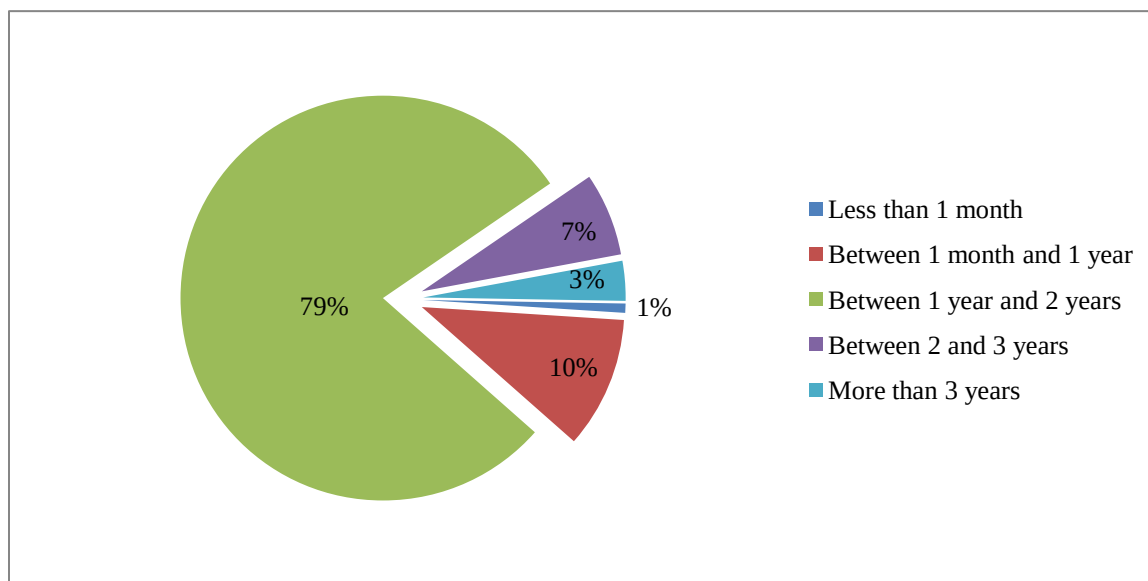
Figure 16: Number of New Volunteers by Group, N=1,286



⁷⁰ The 10 RPCV-PCR volunteers either came back to serve for a second round after having left the country or continued their stay in the country after completing their regular two-year service without interruption.

From the 1,286 new Volunteers or Trainees who arrived to serve in Bulgaria, a total of 1,220 were sworn-in as Peace Corps Volunteers after successful completion of their in-country PST. This means that 5% of all trainees terminated their service earlier.⁷¹ This is lower than the average of 10% for Peace Corps worldwide (Peace Corps 1999:33). The majority of sworn-in volunteers in Bulgaria completed their two-year service with only 137 volunteers (11%) who left after less than a year including nine volunteers (1%) who left in less than one month (see Figure 17). Another 120 volunteers (10%) extended their service, including 39 volunteers who stayed for more than three years (3%).

Figure 17: Percentage of Volunteers by Length of Service, n=1,220



⁷¹ Reasons for early terminations include: (1) voluntary resignation, (2) medical separation (when the volunteer develops a medical problem), (3) interrupted service (when circumstances beyond the control of the trainee or Volunteer make it necessary for the trainee or Volunteer to leave the current assignment) or (4) administrative separation (initiated by Peace Corps staff when the volunteer has violated certain Peace Corps volunteer responsibilities and conduct (PC 2014:92-94).

Volunteer Qualifications

As part of their recruitment Peace Corps Headquarters gave volunteers an assignment category that reflects their *professional qualifications*. These classifications were used by the in-country program staff to request certain types of volunteers for their sector projects (see Table 15). From this data it appears that Secondary English Teachers were in constant demand but that other specialists were popular in specific time periods. Business specialists were in demand in the early to mid-1990s, environmental specialists from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, and community, youth and special education specialists from the mid-2000s until the closure of the program in 2013. The changes in the profile of volunteers seem to reflect changes in the types of sector project that opened and closed over the years. Interviews with the local program staff, however, revealed that in some cases rather than the volunteers being recruited to match the identified in-country needs, the focus of the sector projects changed to reflect the profile of the volunteers who were sent to Bulgaria.

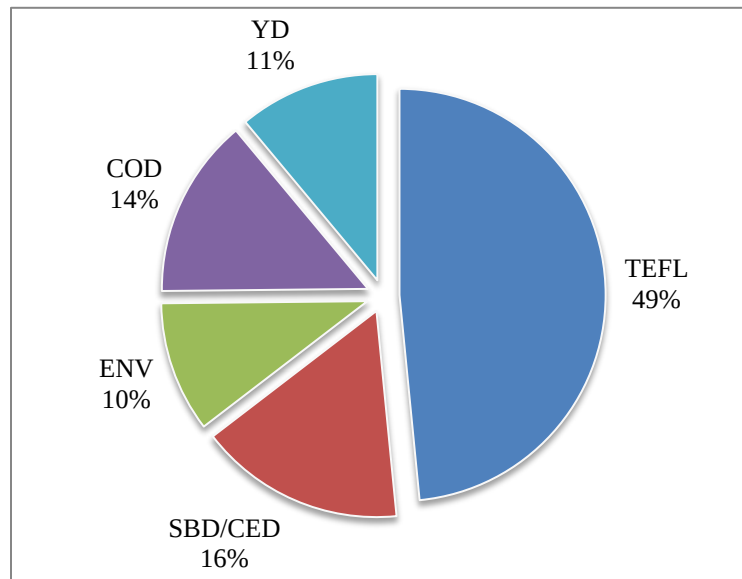
Volunteer Assignments

Regular 2-year volunteers in Bulgaria worked in five sector projects: (1) Teaching English known as the Education Project (TEFL), (2) Business Development known first as the Small Business Development Project (SBD) and later as the Community and Economic Development Project (CED), (3) Environment known as Environmental Management and Training Project (ENV), (4) Youth Development (YD), and (5) Community and Organizational Development (COD). Close to 50% of all volunteers in Bulgaria served in the TEFL project. They were followed by the SBD/CED (16%), COD (14%), YD (11%), and ENV (10%) volunteers (see Figure 18).

Table 15: Number of Peace Corps/Bulgaria Volunteer Assignments, N=1,307

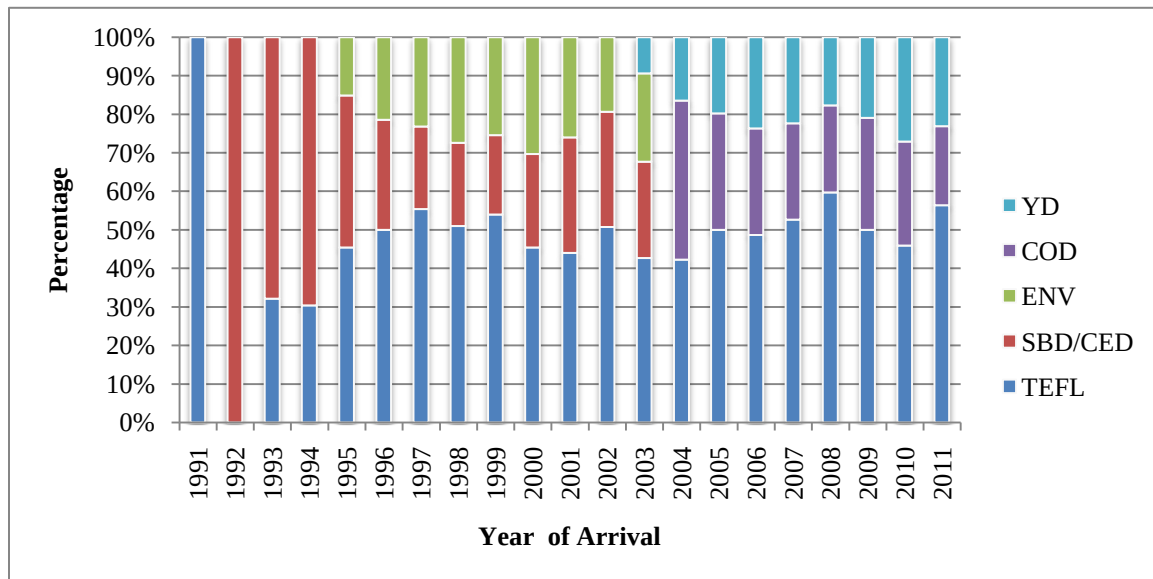
Assignment Classification	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	TOTAL
2-year Assignment																								
Secondary Teacher/English*	18		18	15	19	19	28	19	25	24	15	22	23	24	31	21	22	19	18	20	19			419
Teacher Trainer	5																							5
University	4	2	1			4	3										19	20	13					66
Banking Advisor		3																						3
Business Resource Specialist		10	6	9	10	6	9																	50
Small Business Advisor		11	3		3	4																		21
Computer Science Specialist			2																					2
Environmental Mgt/Trainer					5	7	7																	19
NGO DEVELOPMENT-ENV						2	1																	3
Ag Econ/Farm Mgmt						2	1																	3
NGO DEVELOPMENT-SBD						1	2																	3
Environmental Manager							5																	5
Agribusiness Consultant								1																1
Business Consultant								10						4										14
Environmental Management(Ed)								7	8	7	8	11	21	9										71
Environmental Management(NGO)								3	2	3	3			3										14
Environmental Management(Park)								3	4	5	4	2	4	3										25
Environmental Mgmt. (Forest)								2	2	6				5										15
Primary English Education								5	12	9	9	13	19	21	20	20				20	4			152
Secondary Ed. Teacher Training								2																2
Com. Econ. Dev. Advisor									15	16	15	21	24	19		4	4		5					123
Community Services													7	8	11	8	5			8	2			49
Youth Development														8	10	10	13	14	11	10	2			78
Com. & Org. Development															29	18	16	16	13	23	8			123
Special Education																2	2		3	5	5			17
Unknown							1													1	1			3
Sub-total	27	26	30	24	37	45	57	52	68	70	54	69	98	104	101	83	81	69	63	87	41	0	0	1286
Peace Corps Response																				6	10	3	2	21
Total	27	26	30	24	37	45	57	52	68	70	54	69	98	104	101	83	81	69	63	93	51	3	2	1307
Note: * between 1998 and 2004 the name of the assignment was "Secondary Ed. Eng. Teaching"																								

Figure 18: Percentage of Volunteers by Project Sector, n=1,220



The share of volunteers by project, however, varied by year (see Figure 19). TEFL became the largest program in 1995 when the number of SBD volunteers decreased with the introduction of the ENV project and after that fluctuated between 40 to 60% of all new volunteers. In 1997, the number of SBD/CED and ENV volunteers reached similar numbers, and the two projects increased the number of volunteers until their merger in 2004. Likewise, the number of COD volunteers declined as the number of YD volunteers increased until 2006 when both projects reached similar numbers and then continued to maintain similar levels. The variety of volunteer assignments was greatest in 2003 when volunteers were assigned to a total of four different sector projects. Table 30: Number of New Volunteers by Year and Assignment (in APPENDIX I: Tables) shows the number of sworn-in volunteers per sector project and year including the volunteers in the short-term PCR Program.

Figure 19: Distribution of Volunteers by Year of Arrival and Sector Project (n=1,220)



Volunteer Demographics

In general, Peace Corps/Bulgaria did not publicize information about the demographic profile of its volunteers (age, gender, race/ethnicity, or marital status) only about their number and sector project per region, except for the *2009 Annual Volunteer Survey: Bulgaria*,⁷² which included age and gender information. In 2009, the large majority of volunteers in the country (92%) were in the 20-29 age group and more of them (54%) were female.

Worldwide, the majority of volunteers were also in their 20s (88%), non-minorities (76%), single (93%), and female (59%).⁷³ The statistics for the 1990s (Lihosit 2010), when Bulgaria began to accept volunteers, show a higher average age (30 for 1989 and 31 for 1994) and a smaller share of female volunteers (52% in 1989 and 53% in 1994). This indicates that overtime the profile of volunteers changed, where the share of younger and female volunteers increased over time. One of my research participants suggested that the reason why in the 1990s

⁷² The 2009 survey was completed by 104 Peace Corps/Bulgaria volunteers.

⁷³ Source: Peace Corps. 2010. Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justification, FY 2009, Volunteer Statistics.

the share of older volunteers was larger was because “...*this was the time of a real downturn and recession in the US. Many low to mid-level managers had lost their jobs in downsizing of companies. More than a few "flooded" the Peace Corps*” (Country Director, E-mail communication).

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Pre-Service Trainings (PST) in Bulgaria lasted between 10 to 12 weeks and changed in format over the years to allow for more experiential learning. The purpose of PSTs, however, remained the same: to provide volunteers with comprehensive preparation for their life and work in the country by integrating technical, cross-cultural, language, and health and safety training components (Peace Corps 1999).

At the beginning, the new volunteers completed their training in Bankya in the vicinity of the capital. Then in 1996, Peace Corps/Bulgaria introduced the “home-stay” model, in which trainees lived with a host family and attended training sessions during the day. That year the training site moved from Bankya to the city of Kyustendil and then to other regional and municipal centers in the country (within 70 miles to the capital).

In 2003, the format changed again from a “central-based training” in which all trainees lived in the same training site, to “community-based training” in which smaller groups of four to six trainees lived in up to 17 different training satellites around a larger training center called HUB (in a larger city). Once a week the volunteers would travel to the HUB for joint technical and health and safety training sessions. I worked for Peace Corps as a PST Technical Trainer when the transition from central to community-based training was done.

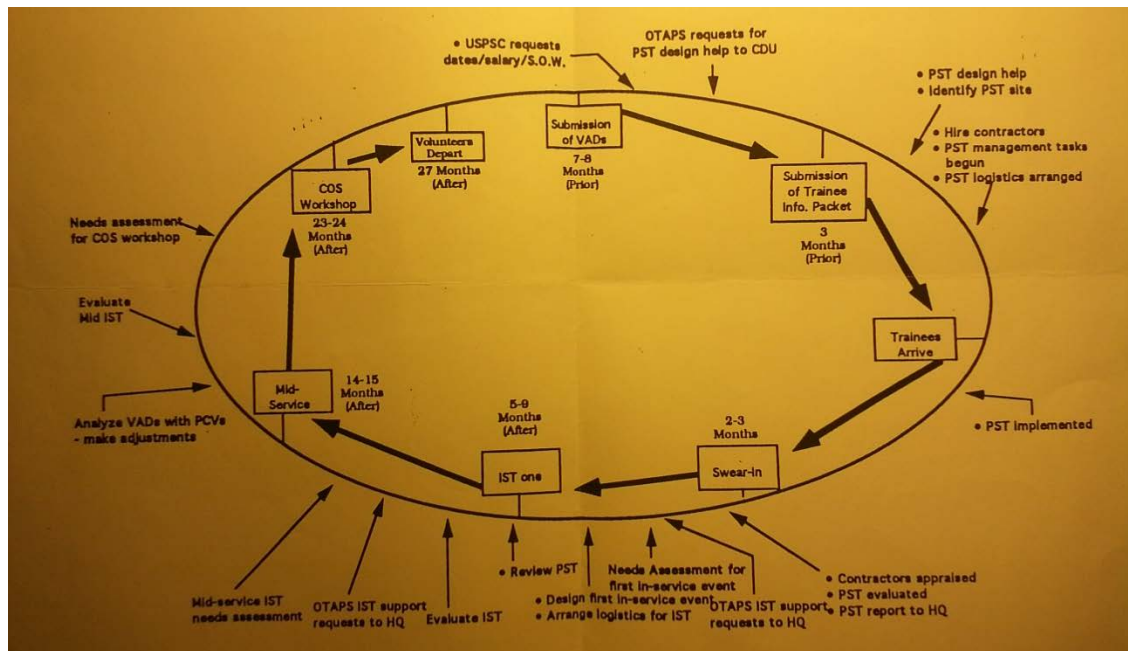
Both changes in 1996 and 2003 aimed to enhance the accomplishment of Goal 2 (Bulgarians improving their understanding of Americans) and Goal 3 (Americans improving their understanding of Bulgarians). The smaller size of the training sites (the satellite sites) was also reflective of the increasing number of smaller size communities where volunteers were placed in to serve after their training. In this sense, the format of the training was supportive of Goal 1 (technical transfer and capacity building) by introducing the volunteers to the dynamics of the types of communities that they would be working with.

After PST, the volunteers and their local counterparts participated in In-Service Trainings (IST) at least once a year. Those were organized for all volunteers present in the country, so that 1st and 2nd year volunteers and their counterparts could meet and exchange experiences. Specialized ISTs were organized by sector project groups. ISTs were valued by the local partners not only for their content but because they served as an opportunity to create and sustain professional networks among the counterparts. Unfortunately those networks disappeared when Peace Corps stopped placing volunteers in those organizations:

*Peace Corps organized much training and all counterparts could see each other then which was extra....for example: the NGO in Smolyan [...], the municipality in Sliven, a park directorate, and **all of this helps networking not only within Peace Corps but with other colleagues. Sitting on a table with other people... this was useful. We do not have this anymore. Even the Park Directorates we don't know each other. We used to be a big family.*** (Nature Park Partner, Malko Tarnovo Focus Group, emphasis mine)

In Figure 20, there is an image of the In-Country Training Cycle that Peace Corps/Bulgaria used in the 2000s. Typically volunteers participated in one PST, two ISTs and one Closing of Service (COS) conference. Volunteer counterparts attended only the ISTs and parts of the PST.

Figure 20: Diagram of Peace Corps/Bulgaria In-Country Training Cycle



Source: Personal Archive.

LOCAL PARTNERS

My research generated near complete volunteer site placement records with information about the host communities (sites) for 1,201 PCVs (98%) and for all 21 PCR volunteers. The record of host (sponsor organizations) is less complete and includes data for 986 PCVs (81%) and for all 21 PCR volunteers.

Site Placement Process

In Bulgaria, volunteer placements were determined by the program staff during PST. Various criteria were used to match the volunteers to host organizations from a pool of candidates that were selected as potential site placements prior to the arrival of the volunteer

group.⁷⁴ Host organizations typically worked with one volunteer at a time, except for the SBD volunteers who worked in teams of two. Very few volunteers had assignments that required them to work and live in different or multiple communities, but all volunteers were encouraged to work with multiple organizations within the community they lived, in addition to their primary host organization. The sharing of volunteers by multiple organizations within a community was emphasized after 2003 with the establishment of the COD program.

Host Organizations

Volunteers worked with a total of 715 different organizations, which included different types of government/public and non-government organizations (See Figure 21). At the beginning, all volunteers worked with government organizations because they could cover housing and/or utility costs.⁷⁵ The host organizations that were unable to cover housing costs but that Peace Corps wanted to work with included various types of NGOs. The CED program was especially focused on recruiting host organizations that could cover housing/and or utility costs as a sign of their commitment to working with the volunteer:

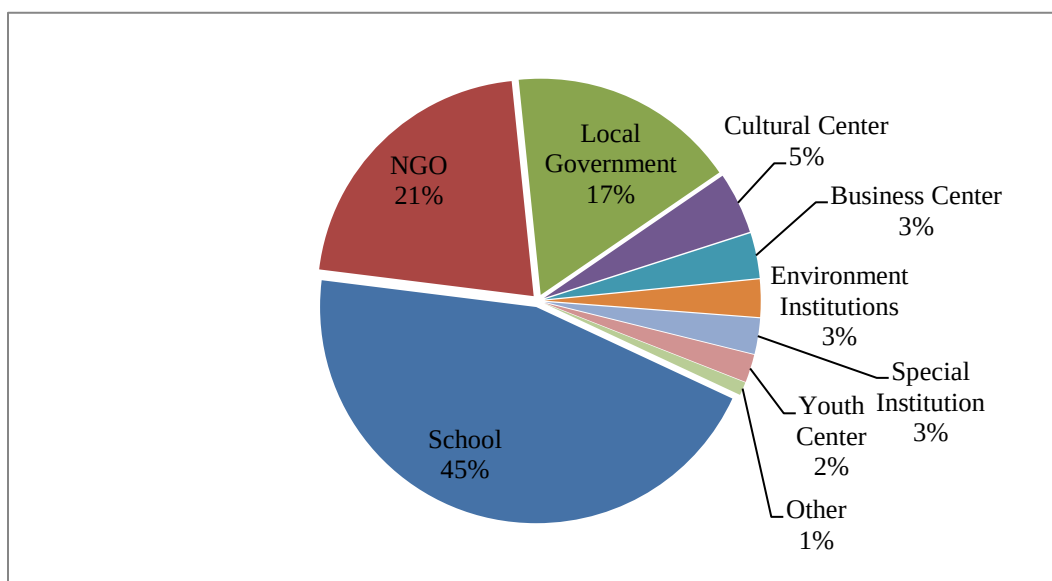
I had one thing that I insisted upon which was different when compared to the other programs in Bulgaria and namely the TEFL and the ENV programs at that time and it was that I thought that the principal of getting Bulgarian organizations host the volunteers by covering all or at least most or at least half of the costs was something very important to have a real program where you could have real impact on the Bulgarian host organizations demonstrated by their willingness to cover their costs, not by the Peace Corps, and I think that that was the right way to go and I did manage to get only, at some points after 3 or 4 years, I had only 10% of 15% of the funding for housing coming from the Peace Corps, which was in sharp contrast with what was with the other programs [...which] got 70 or 90% housing costs covered by Peace Corps. (BG Program Assistant, Interview)

⁷⁴ Occasionally, the program staff would develop a placement after the arrival of a volunteer to match their particular skill set.

⁷⁵ For the local public organizations the decision to cover the housing/utility cost for the volunteer was made by the municipal council, while for regional government structures it was made by the respective ministry.

Different types of organizations were associated with one or more of the sector projects. Some organizations sponsored only one volunteer while others worked with multiple volunteers over time and/or concurrently. Then, while the large majority of volunteers worked with one host organization, 41 volunteers were assigned to two or more organizations in the same community.

Figure 21: Percentage of Host Organizations by Type, n=715



Notes: Cultural Centers include “chitalishte,” museums, and libraries. Business Centers include Bulgarian-American Business Centers established by Peace Corps, UNDP business centers, regional economic development agencies, and chambers of commerce. Environment Institutions include national and nature parks, forestry units, and regional environmental inspectorates. Special Institutions include orphanages, boarding schools for truant, and centers for children with disabilities. Other includes regional administrations and universities.

Host Communities

As shown in Figure 22, close to 50% of all first volunteer placements were in communities that were municipal seats, followed by regional seats (39%), and villages (10%). Very few volunteers worked at the capital (2%) or in small towns that were not a municipal seat (1%). At the beginning almost all volunteers were placed in the larger regional center cities (*oblasten grad*). Gradually Pace Corps changed its site placement strategy and started to move

out of the urban areas and into the rural areas of the country: first by placing volunteers in smaller cities that were also the municipal seat centers (but not the regional seat) and then to small villages (see Figure 23).

Figure 22: Percentage of Volunteer Placements by Type of Host Community, n= 1,221

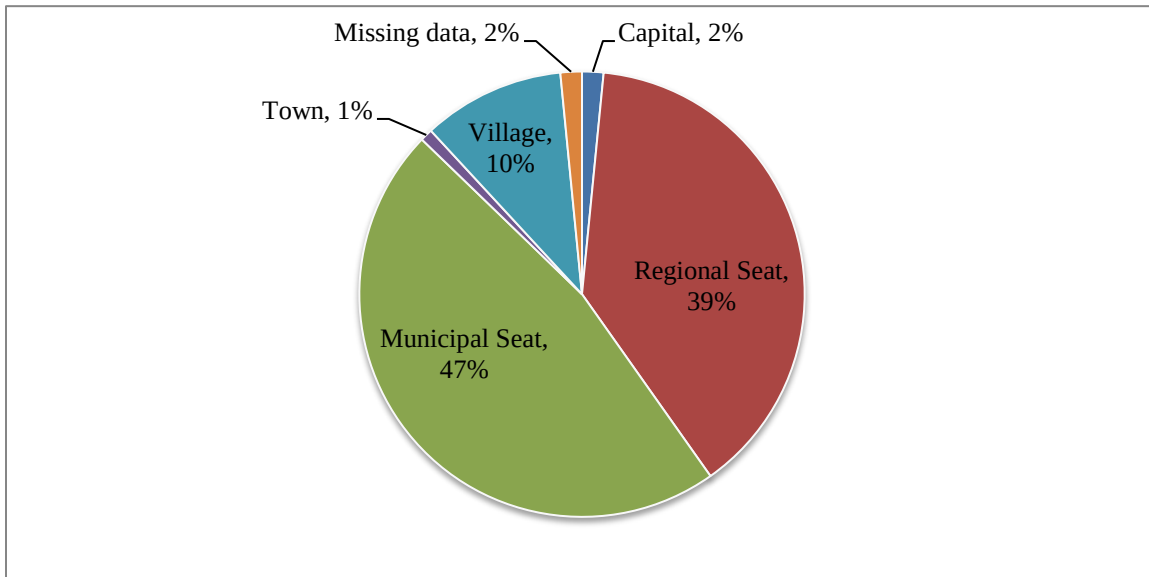
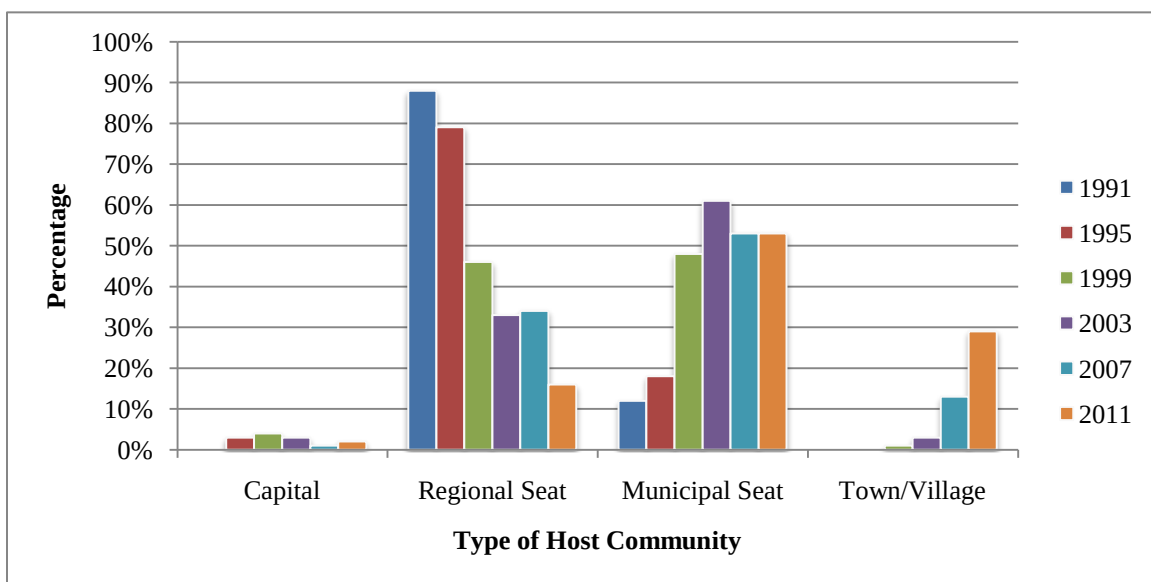
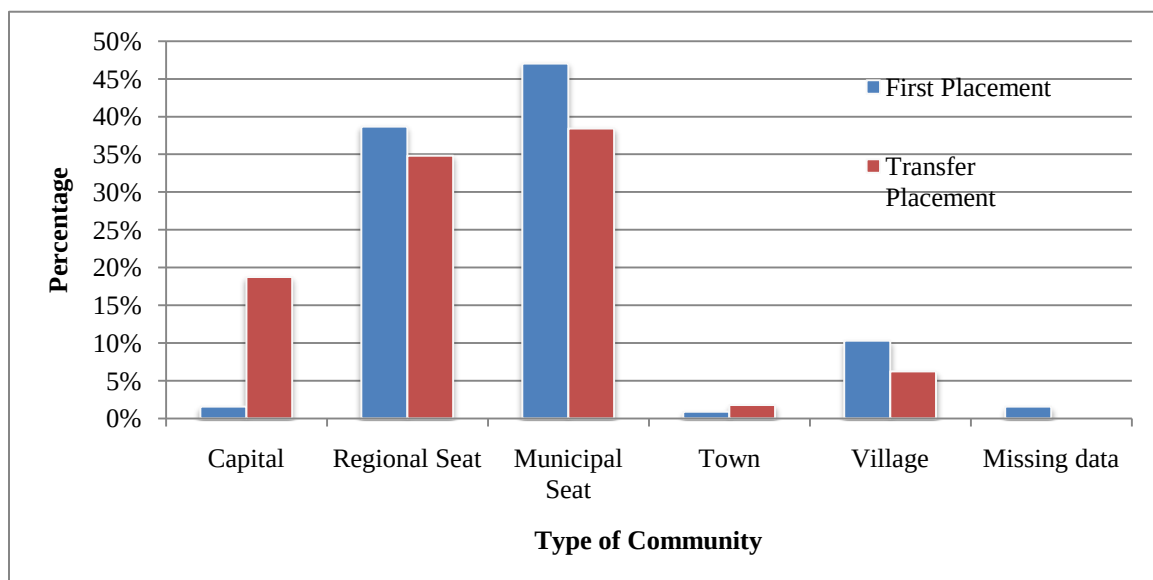


Figure 23: Percentage of First Volunteer Placements by Type of Host Community in Select Years, n=1,221



Volunteers were rarely allowed to transfer to a new host organization and/or community. Analysis of site placement data indicates that 107 of all volunteers (9%) changed sites with volunteers who extended their service changing sites more often compared to the whole volunteer population. The grounds for service extension include having “...experience or a scarce skill that is needed in a new or ongoing project, and an outstanding record of service” (Peace Corps 1999:76). When volunteers changed sites, they were also more likely to move from a smaller to a larger site with the capital accounting for 19% of all transfer sites, while for only 2% of all first site placements (see Figure 24). This is a reverse trend to the general trend of Peace Corps/Bulgaria to move its volunteers from larger to smaller communities over the years.

Figure 24: Percentage of First and Transfer Volunteer Placements by Type of Host Community, n= 1,333

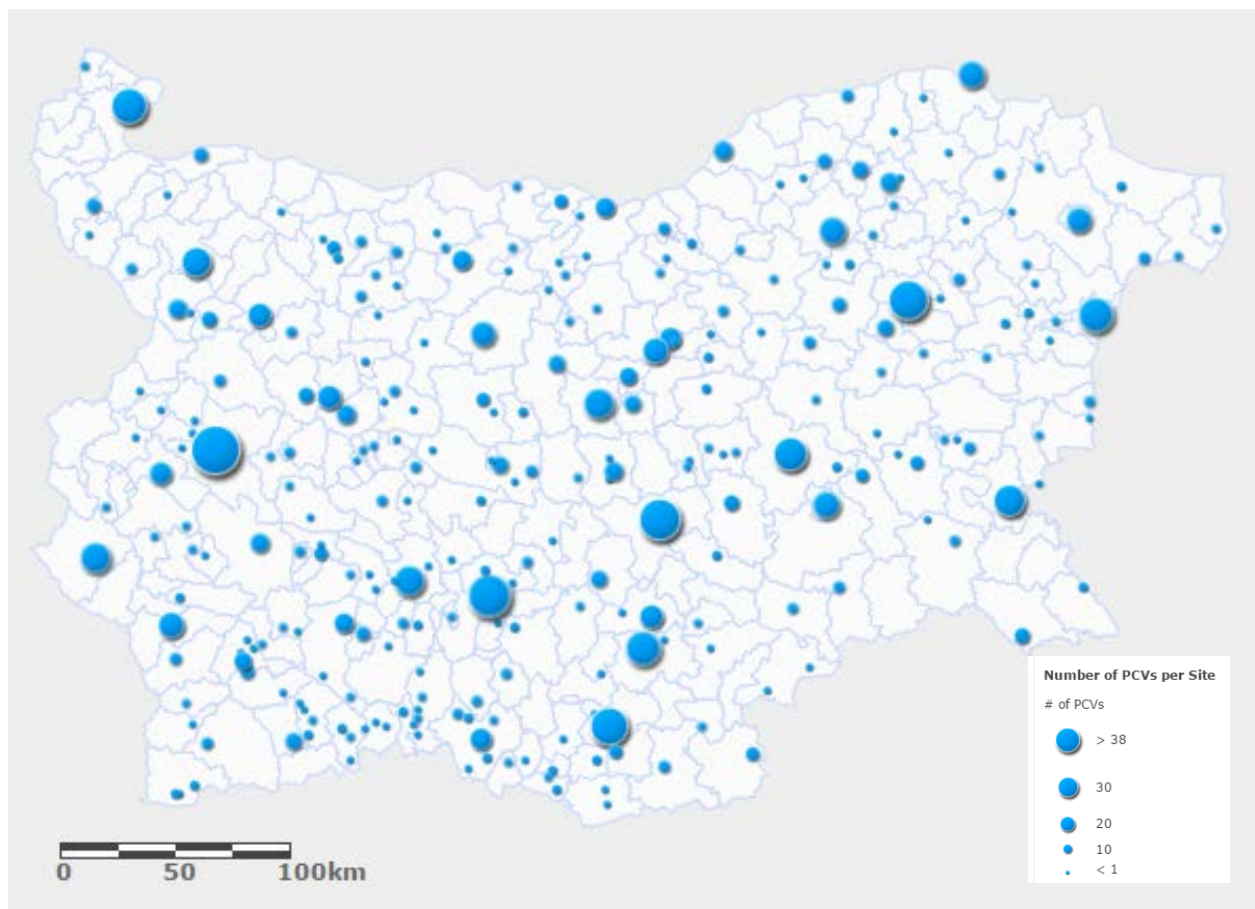


Note: First placements include data for 1,221 volunteers, while transfer placements include data about 112 volunteers, for a total of 1,333 volunteer placements.

Altogether, in 22 years, Peace Corps/Bulgaria established an impressive presence in the country with volunteers serving a total of 273 communities in 202 municipalities (76% of all 265 municipalities in the country) in all 28 regions in Bulgaria. When the 63 PST communities are

added, the coverage is even greater with 212 or 80% of municipalities in the country having interacted with a Volunteer or a Trainee. A map with the number of volunteers by host community is shown in Figure 25. A list with the number of volunteers, host organizations, and host communities by region is available in Table 31 (in APPENDIX I: Tables). Then, a list with all 63 PST communities by group is available in Table 29: Number of Trainees and New Volunteers by Year, Group, and PST Sites (in APPENDIX I: Tables).

Figure 25: Map of Peace Corps/Bulgaria Host Communities



Note: The map does not show host communities for PST only.

LOCAL STAFF

The US Staff

Peace Corps/Bulgaria had a total of 10 Country Directors, the majority of whom were RPCVs themselves. The highest staff turnover was in the early 1990s when between 1992 and 1994 “...the program had four country directors and one acting director in a 20-month span” (GAO 1994:6). Two of the country directors were recalled after a “rebellion” by both volunteers and the local Bulgarian staff. The issue was that the directors were seen as trying to impose a “Third World” management perspective understood as a management perspective for a Third World country. In response, Peace Corps began sending Country Directors with experience from a post-socialist country and increased the number of the US staff including a designated APCD for programming and training.

The Country Director was the most senior Peace Corps official in the country and was also a member of the U.S. mission in the country and worked closely with the U.S. Ambassador (Peace Corps 1999). Under the Country Director were APCDs responsible for programming and training. Those could be specialists in one sector (functioning as Program Managers) or specialists with responsibility to oversee all program and training activities (formerly Program and Training Officer). The other US staff members included the APCD for administration and the Peace Corps Medical Officer.

The Bulgarian Staff

The local Bulgarian staff, known in Peace Corps as host country nationals (HCNs), made up the larger part of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria staff and included program and training staff, administrative staff, and medical staff. In the early years, like with the US staff, there was also a

staff-turnover with the local Bulgarian staff, although the Bulgarians left Peace Corps either to emigrate for work or to do graduate work or moved to positions with more responsibilities with another development organization. While, the APCD positions were typically reserved for Americans, three Bulgarians were promoted to serve in that capacity in recognition of their high professionalism.

In the first years, the local staff recruitment strategy focused on “young” and “open-minded people”: *“My thinking there was that they had not worked in a large lumbering communist style bureaucracy and that would not work”* (Country Director, Interview). The first two Bulgarian program staff members were also individuals with cross-cultural experience: one had lived in Niger as a child and the other had lived in Spain as an adult. The language training for the first volunteer groups was done by the Institute for Foreign Students, which was established in 1963 to teach foreign students in Bulgarian universities, most of which were coming from friendly Third World countries.⁷⁶ In this sense, it is an interesting contradiction that Bulgaria’s communist legacy as a participant in cross-cultural exchanges facilitated the post-socialist cross-cultural exchange with the U.S.

By the late 1990s, Peace Corps had developed two pools of candidates for program staff positions including former PST staff and former counterparts.

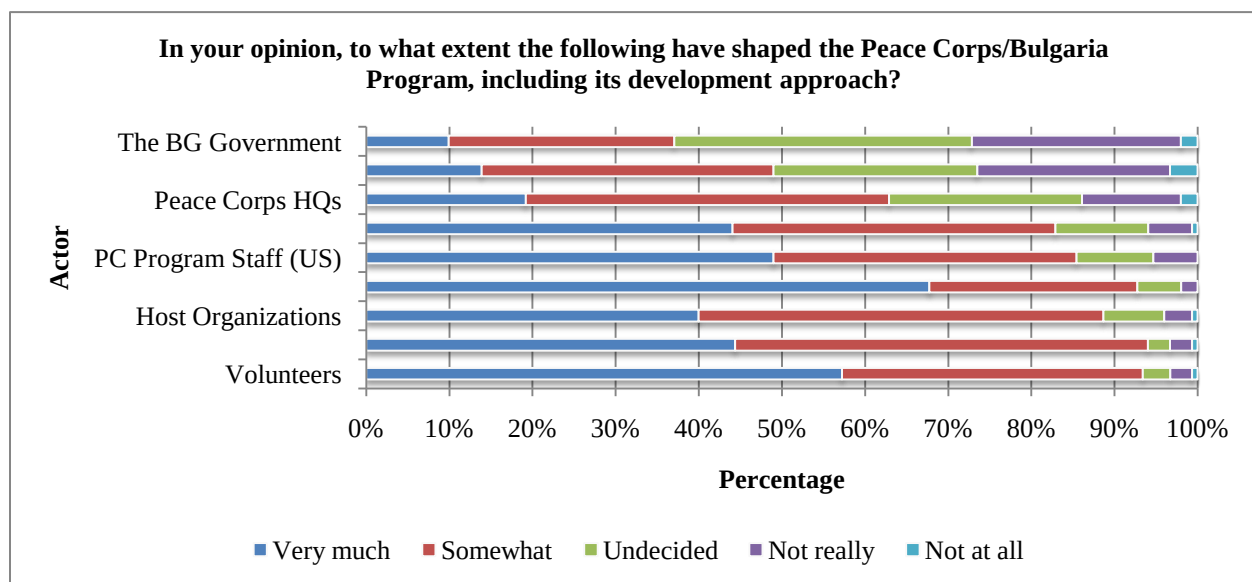
*Our two main recruiting areas were our language and cross-cultural facilitators many of whom were teachers, English teachers and some were geography teachers, also our counterparts, former counterparts. But we really looked for people who had basic technical knowledge in the areas that we were dealing with but we really did not need highly technical specialists, more importantly we needed people that had good relational skills because more than a program manager they were **relationship managers**. They had to manage relationships with the host organizations, with the counterparts, and with the volunteers. (US APCD – Programming & Training, Interview, emphasis mine)*

⁷⁶ Source: Department for Language Teaching and International Students. 2015. “About Us.” Retrieved October 29, 2015 (<http://www.deo.uni-sofia.bg/en/about>).

Most of the program staff that was hired in the late 1990s remained with Peace Corps until its closure in 2013 and became the carriers of the institutional memory of Peace Corps/Bulgaria. The importance of the local staff in the shaping of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program, including its development approach, was confirmed by both the volunteers, who acknowledged the local Bulgarian staff as the most influential member of the partnership structure (see Figure 26). The senior US staff described them as “critical,” “super important,” and having “the real lead” in programmatic changes.

The Bulgarian staff themselves thought that the volunteer perceptions were reflective of their own position and interaction with the different members of the partnership structure. Therefore, they had undermined the role of the Peace Corps Country Director and of Peace Corps Headquarters in shaping the framework within which both the staff and the volunteers operated. But the staff agreed that the Bulgarian government, while supportive of Peace Corps, was a passive actor.

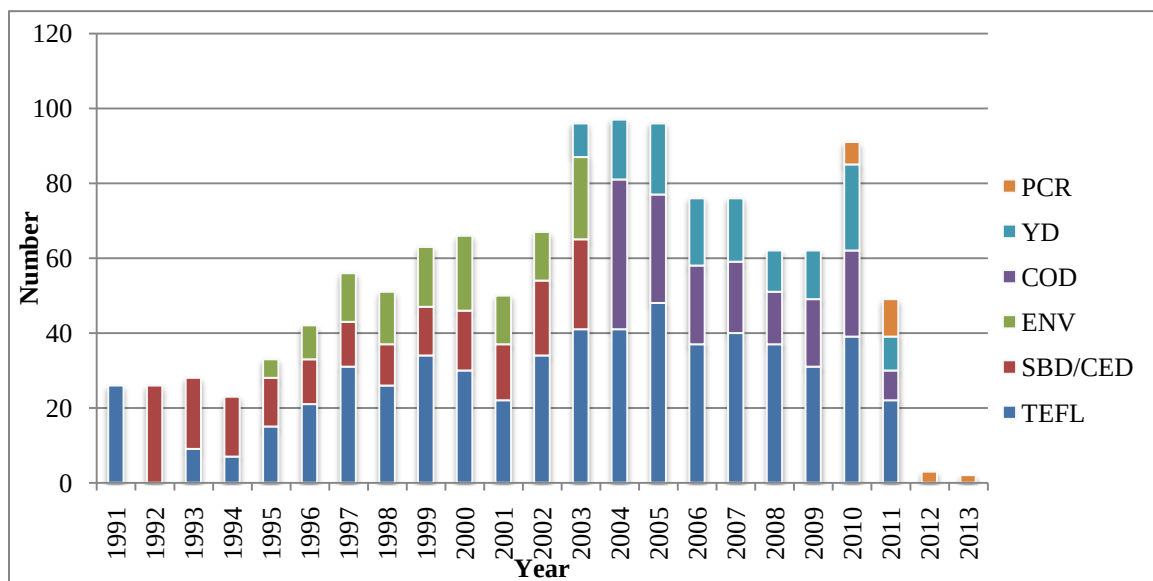
Figure 26: Volunteer Perceptions on Power of Different Peace Corps/Bulgaria Actors, n=152



THE DECISION TO CLOSE

Given that all other Peace Corps missions in Eastern Europe closed prior to their EU membership the Bulgarian staff expected a similar exit timeline. However, as shown in Figure 27, in Bulgaria the program increased the number of new volunteers after 2004, when the announcement that the country will enter the EU in 2007 was made rather than decreasing their number in preparation for its closure. The explanation for the continued presence of Peace Corps after 2004 and especially after 2007 by the local program staff was that “*we were good at defining our needs*” (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview).

Figure 27: Number of New Volunteers by Sector Project and Year, n=1,241



In reality, agency-wide Peace Corps developments were also an important factor in shaping the growth trends. In 2010, the U.S. Congress passed the largest increase in annual appropriation in the history of the Peace Corps as part of a campaign effort to double the number of volunteers by the 50th anniversary of Peace Corps in 2011 to 15,000 – 16,000 (Meisler

2011:212). That same year, Peace Corps/Bulgaria began preparations to become a “mega-growth” post in 2011, meaning that it was planning to manage a 90% increase in Trainee Input by 2012 (Peace Corps Bulgaria 2010). The conditions that warranted the expansion included: the possibility for a return to placements with "mainstream" Bulgarian populations that can complement local efforts that feed national goals; the strong support among Bulgarian ministries (particularly the Ministry of Education), schools, local governments, and from rural and urban communities for the program, including the ability of 70% of host agencies to cover volunteer housing and or utility costs; and the lack of significant concerns about volunteer safety in the country. In this sense, the decision to grow the program was not in reaction to worsening conditions in the country but rather the capacity of the post to absorb an increase of volunteers within an agency-wide initiative to double the number of Peace Corps volunteers worldwide. As the Country Director at the time explained, “[t]here weren’t that many countries where he [Peace Corps Director Williams] could pump in volunteers that quickly. Bulgaria was one” (Country Director, Interview). The history of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program thus exemplifies the culture of “cherry-picking” where development assistance is granted to those that are most skilled at framing their problems and who are not necessarily in most need.

When the announcement that Peace Corps will transition from Bulgaria by 2013 was made on September 11, 2011 months after the celebrations for the 50/20th anniversary of Peace Corps in the country and amidst the “mega growth” preparations, it came as a total surprise. Officially, the closure was putting an end to a successful partnership. The decision was made in tandem for both Bulgaria and Romania.

...the Peace Corps leaves a strong legacy that will live on in both countries [...] both countries have experienced high rates of development and achieved membership in the

European Union. [...] The Peace Corps considers these programs to have been extraordinarily successful in terms of achieving its development and cultural exchange goals.⁷⁷

Unofficially, the main reason to close the program was Bulgaria's relatively high ranking on the UN's Human Development Index (HDI) vis-à-vis other countries in the context of significant reductions of the Peace Corps agency budget. In 2011, when the decision was made Bulgaria's HDI was 0.775, lower than Romania's HDI of 0,786, but higher than other Peace Corps countries in the region and worldwide. The announcement was made after the training and placement of the B27 group, which became the last "legacy group", although the PCR program continued to accept volunteers through 2013.

CONCLUSION

The history of Peace Corps/Bulgaria exemplifies the culture of "cherry-picking" where development assistance is granted to those that are most skilled at framing their problems and who are not necessarily in most need. Both the opening and the closure of the program were initiated by the U.S. Government represented by Peace Corps Headquarters in the context of agency-wide developments. First in the context of an agency-wide (and U.S. foreign policy) decision to enter Eastern Europe following the collapse of state socialism and then in the context of an agency-wide decision to exit the countries with the highest HDIs due to significant reductions in the agency budget following the Global Recession.

During its operation, the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program was characterized by the following trends. The program expanded and diversified in volunteer assignments and types of

⁷⁷ Source: Peace Corps. 2013. "The Peace Corps to Phase out Programs in Bulgaria and Romania." January 11. Retrieved August 12, 2015 (<https://www.peacecorps.gov/news/library/the-peace-corps-to-phase-out-programs-in-bulgaria-and-romania/>).

host organizations with the largest number of volunteers and programs being in the 2003-2005 period. The annual number of new volunteers ranged from 24 to 104 for a total of 1,297 Americans who came to serve in the education, small business development, community economic development, environment, youth development, community and organizational development projects and as Response Corps Volunteers. Close to half of all volunteers worked as English Teachers in primary and secondary schools and the other half worked with local governments, NGOs business centers, national and nature parks, institutions for children, and youth and cultural centers.

Over time, the training and placement of volunteers moved from the larger city centers to smaller towns and villages with predominantly minority populations in an effort to address the growing development gaps between the urban and rural areas and between the majority (Bulgarian) and minority (Roma and Turkish) populations. In 22 years, Peace Corps Volunteers had lived and served in a total of 273 communities in 202 municipalities in all 28 regions in Bulgaria, which represents 76% of all 265 municipalities in the country. When the 63 PST communities are added the coverage increases to 80% of all municipalities. The PST communities are the places with the most intimate interactions between Americans and Bulgarians with all new volunteers after 1997 having lived with a host family for three months prior to their service.

While the program had a difficult start with high staff turnover it stabilized in the mid-1990s with the hiring of Country Directors with experience from a former post-socialist country and a designated APCD for programming and training. By the late 1990s Peace Corps/Bulgaria also benefited from the emergence of two pools of candidates for program staff positions among former PST language and cross-cultural facilitators and volunteer counterparts. Most of the late

1990s local Bulgarian hires remained with the organization until its closure and provided institutional stability for the program.

Altogether, the program operated for a much longer period than anticipated, yet the decision to close in 2011 came as a surprise. Both internal and external dynamics played into the decision to maintain the program after Bulgaria's entry into the EU in 2007. In Bulgaria there was strong support and interest in the program and the local staff implemented both programming and site placement changes in order to make the case for the continued need for the program. The latter meant that the country had the capacity to absorb a substantial increase in the number of volunteers within an agency-wide initiative planned for 2011. In the context of significant reductions of the Peace Corps budget, however, Peace Corps headquarters made the decision to close the program altogether.

CHAPTER 6: PUBLIC DISCOURSES ON THE ROLE OF PEACE CORPS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the public discourse about the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria's post-socialist transformation. It includes four types of discourses that vary in their intended audience. I begin with the joint (U.S.-Bulgaria) legal discourse aimed at current and potential members of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria partnership structure. Then, I move to the U.S. Government/Peace Corps discourse aimed at three types of audiences: the American public, the new volunteers, and the Bulgarian public. Next is a limited analysis of the Bulgarian (BG) Government discourse from Peace Corps/Bulgaria's 2011 20th Anniversary celebrations and from the 2012 Legacy celebrations, both of which aimed at the Bulgarian public. The fourth discourse is by volunteers aimed at members of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria partnership structure but mostly at fellow volunteers and is also part of the Legacy celebrations. The analyses of the discourses trace articulations of the transition goals and of the three Core Peace Corps Goals as well as evidence of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms. The chapter ends with a discussion about the similarities and differences between the discourses by source and audience.

JOINT LEGAL DISCOURSE

The joint legal discourse about the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria includes the Country Agreement and the framework agreements that were signed to clarify the implementation of the agreement. Since representatives of both the U.S. and the Bulgarian Governments signed them they are part of the official government discourse. The main audiences of the agreements are the American and Bulgarian publics and more specifically the various members of the Peace

Corps/Bulgaria partnerships structure. Below are the analysis of the Country Agreement and a sample of framework agreements. In the early years of the Peace Corps program these agreements were instrumental in the process of site development as they established the legitimate presence of Peace Corps in the country.

Because here [in Bulgaria] it is very important the mayor of even a very small city to know that we have met with the Ministry. So if the mayor wasn't sure or didn't know that we had all these preliminary jobs and meetings with high-rank officials then the mayor wouldn't be as willing to work with PCVs as he or she was. (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview).

Country Agreement

The Agreement between the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the United States Peace Corps in the People's Republic of Bulgaria known as the Country Agreement for the opening of the Peace Corps program in Bulgaria was signed on September 27, 1990 . It begins with the acknowledgement that it "...recognize[es] the importance of developing **mutually advantageous relationships and cooperation** between their nations" (Country Agreement, Preamble, emphasis mine) and proceeds to outline the individual and joint responsibilities for the U.S. Government and the Bulgarian Government. The U.S. Government responsibilities concern the preparation and support of the volunteers. The BG Government responsibilities cover the treatment of the U.S. Government representatives (volunteers, staff, and contractors) and their property. The joint responsibilities include being in mutual agreement about the volunteer selection criteria, the volunteer tasks, and the selection criteria for the volunteer host organization. A summary of the responsibilities are included in Table 16.

The Country Agreement does not include any language about either the type of "agreed tasks" that the volunteers were expected to perform nor about how those tasks may support the goals of Bulgaria's post-socialist transition or the Core Peace Corps goals. The implementation

of the agreement, including clarifications about the agreed tasks is left to the executive agents designated by each government. Peace Corps/Bulgaria served as a representative of the U.S. Government, while “appropriate government agencies” served as a representative of the BG Government. Interestingly, in the agreement volunteers are expected to “...**work under** the immediate supervision of government and private organizations” (Country Agreement, Article I, emphasis mine). The image of a volunteer working “under” a local organization conveys reverse power dynamics from the image of a volunteer helping local people from the Core Peace Corps goals.

Table 16: Party Responsibilities in the Peace Corps Bulgaria Country Agreement

Party	Responsibility
U.S. Government	• To furnish Peace Corps volunteers as may be requested by the Bulgarian government; • To provide training to enable the volunteers to perform the agreed tasks in the most effective manner. • To provide the volunteers with limited quantities of equipment and supplies to perform their tasks effectively. • To comply with national laws and regulations while in the country including Peace Corps representatives, staff and contractors.
BG Government	• To treat the volunteers and their property equitably. • To fully consult and cooperate with U.S. government representatives on all matters concerning the volunteers. • To grant the Peace Corps representatives and staff members the same treatment as personnel of comparable rank in the U.S. Embassy except they will not have diplomatic immunity. • To exempt volunteers from certain taxes and custom duties • To except equipment and supplies for use in Peace Corps programs from all taxes, custom duties and other charges. • To exempt all funds introduced for use by Peace Corps programs from investment, deposit requirements, and currency controls.
Joint	• Mutual agreement on the volunteer selection criteria • Mutual agreement on the tasks that the volunteers will perform • Mutual agreement on the selection of the organizations the volunteers will work under. • To make changes and to resolve disputes amicably.

Framework Agreements

Peace Corps/Bulgaria signed framework agreements for each of its sector projects (known as programs in Bulgaria), typically with the corresponding sector ministry. Some projects operated under framework agreements with more than one ministry and/or changed their partner ministry as the government changed its structure. This sample includes agreements with four different ministries for four different sector projects: (1) the 2002 Agreement with the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) for the Education project (TEFL Agreement), (2) the 2002 Agreement with the Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW) for the Environment project (ENV Agreement), (3) the 2003 Agreement with the Ministry of the Economy (MoE) for the Economic Development project (CED Agreement), and (4) the 2008 Agreement with the Ministry of the Economy and Energy (MoEE) for the Community and Organizational Development project (COD Agreement).

Structurally, all four agreements are similar in including a section on the purpose of the agreement, the purpose of the sector project (goals and objectives), and how Peace Corps and the Ministry will support the work of the volunteers (see Table 17). They differ in the details about the program implementation (the process of selection of host organizations), the qualifications and preparations of the volunteers, and the systems for program monitoring. Only the TEFL and CED Agreements have sections on “volunteer supervision” and “volunteer resignation, termination and extension,” which may be reflective of stronger expectations by the TEFL and CED host organizations that the volunteers will work under their direction as subordinates rather than as equals.

Table 17: Structure of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria Framework Agreements

Components	Project Sector			
	TEFL (2002)	CED (2003)	ENV (2002)	COD (2008)
Purpose of the Agreement	x	x	x	x
Purpose of the Program	x	x	x	x
Program Implementation	x	x	Under Responsibilities	In preamble
Qualifications and Preparations of Peace Corps Volunteers	x	x	Under responsibilities	Under responsibilities
Volunteer Supervision	x	x	-	-
Support of Peace Corps Volunteers/ Peace Corps, Ministry and Joint Responsibilities	x	x	x	x
Program Monitoring	x	x	x	Under responsibilities
Peace Corps Volunteer resignation, termination, and extension	x	x	-	-
Termination of the Agreement/ Modification of the Agreement	x	x	x	x
Final Provision		x	x	x
Period of validity	Until terminated by either party	4 years	Until terminated by either party	Until terminated by either party
Total Number of Components	9	10	7	6
Total Number of Pages	4	4	4	2

There are important substantive differences between the agreements. For example, the “purpose of the program” section for the TEFL and the CED Agreements include all three Peace Corps Goals, whereas in the ENV and the COD Agreements this section covers only Goal 1. All project articulation of Goal 1 focuses on capacity building (human development approach that does not challenge and endorses neoliberalism), except for the ENV Agreement that focuses on cooperation (counter-neoliberal mechanism):

- “Seek to increase the **capacity** of the Ministry and local institutions for better English language education at the national and local level” (TEFL Agreement);

- “Seek to increase the **capacity** of the Ministry and local institutions and organizations to foster business and economic development at the local level” (CED agreement);
- “This agreement aims at **cooperation** [...] in the implementation of the Bulgarian national policy in the field of environmental protection at the regional and local level” (ENV Agreement);
- “In supporting their common goals of assisting local organizations and community groups in increasing their **capacity** to address local needs through human capital development, organizational strengthening, networking, and involvement in civil society” (COD Agreement).

None of the agreements includes references to the transition goals (democracy, market economy or European integration). The language of the sector specific goals, however, conveys a difference in the expectations regarding the scope of each project: at the national and local, including by assisting the Ministries, for the TEFL and CED projects; at the regional and local level for the ENV project; and at the local and organizational level the COD project. The specific mentions of the Ministries as a target of assistance is surprising because the data on volunteer site placement does not include a single case where a volunteer was placed with a Ministry as their host organization, although some volunteers were placed with regional government structures. CED volunteers were placed with regional administrations. ENV volunteers were placed with nature parks and forestry units, which fall under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, and with national parks directorates and regional inspectorates on Environment and Water, which fall under the Ministry of Environment and Water. Only at the very start of the TEFL program in 1991, Peace Corps partnered with the Ministry of Education and Science and the British Council to organize national Teacher Certification courses:

...this was...competitive, actually highly competitive course that I qualified to attend. Thirty Bulgarians had that chance to participate in the course and to become English teachers. [...] the course was based there in Bankya and ...my trainers were Bulgaria 1s and also the first Bulgarian staff who were Americans, I mean Peace Corps/Bulgaria staffs who were Americans. (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview).

Other differences include that in the TEFL and CED Agreements there are specific goals/objectives that pertain to the way that the volunteer should approach their work:

- **“Work within** the existing Bulgarian educational system, according to the goals and priorities of the Ministry” (TEFL Agreement);
- **“Work within and complement** existing Bulgarian infrastructures” (CED Agreement).

The “working from within” approach requires some level of appreciation for the Bulgarian way of working, therefore a cultural relativism (counter-neoliberal) rather than cultural supremacy (neoliberal) volunteer subjectivity.

In the ENV and the COD Agreements, there are explicit expectations that the Ministries will assist with the training of Peace Corps volunteers. In the ENV agreement it says:

Article 3.(2) The Ministry of Environment and Water, as organizer, whenever possible **will invite** the Environment Program Volunteers of the United States Peace Corps/Bulgaria **to participate in seminars and conferences** in accordance with the projects, in which they are involved.

(3) The Ministry of Environment and Water **will assist** the Environment Program Volunteers the United States Peace Corps/Bulgaria **during their Pre-Service Training** and their two-year service in the country by:

- (a) providing information about the Bulgarian legislation and priorities in the field of the environment
- (b) **providing expert assistance and consultations.** (ENV Agreement)

The language in the COD Agreement is very similar: “Article 3. The Ministry of Economy and Energy will assist the COD Program [...] (2) **providing** up-to-date information and resources, and **expert assistance**” (COD Agreement). In the other two agreements it only states that the Ministries “may include volunteers in trainings for their personnel.”

This is a departure from the Country Agreement where the training of volunteers is part of the U.S. Government responsibility. More importantly, the expectation that the Ministries will assist with the technical training of the volunteers positions the volunteers as both objects and subjects of development (reciprocity as counter-neoliberal mechanism).

In the “program monitoring” sections of the TEFL and CED Agreements it says that Peace Corps and the Ministries will undertake monitoring of the projects for their own purposes that they agree to share in order to improve the projects. The ENV Agreement takes this a step further by formalizing the monitoring process from sharing of information to the establishment of a joint working group to “... meet at least once annually to review the work of the Environment Program Volunteers [...] and to coordinate the joint future activity” (Article 5(3)). The COD Agreement also features a similar joint responsibility. The agreement for regular and joint monitoring of the projects and especially of coordination of future activity implies that the Bulgarian government wanted/planned to be an active partner in the decision-making process about changes in the sector projects.

Finally, it is not entirely clear why the TEFL and CED Agreements are almost identical, while the ENV agreement, which is from the same period, has a different structure that is much more similar to the COD agreement from a later period. Although, the similarities between the ENV and COD agreement are mostly likely due to the ENV staff continuing as the COD staff. The fact that the agreement differ by project, rather than all of them following the same format,

is indicative of the degree of freedom in that the local staff had in the design of the agreements, as well as their important role in shaping the Peace Corps/Bulgaria Program.

U.S. GOVERNMENT (PEACE CORPS) DISCOURSE

In order to assess, if and how the official development rhetoric of Peace Corps changed over time, I analyzed the annual Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentations/Justifications (CBJ) documents (1992 through 2009), Peace Corps/Bulgaria Volunteer Welcome Books (2002, 2003, 2007, 2008, and 2009), and Peace Corps/Bulgaria Legacy Materials (2011, 2012, and 2013). Each of these documents has a different audience: the American public represented by Congress, potential volunteers, and the general Bulgarian public.

To the American Public (Congress)

The annual CBJs include information about the activities of Peace Corps worldwide. Between 1991 and 2009 all CBJs include Country Narratives for Bulgaria (one to three pages) that in most years covered statistical data, overview of the country and the history of the program, actual and projected estimates for volunteers and funds for the past and upcoming two years, and description of the activities of the volunteers by project sectors (see Table 18). CBJs after 2010 include only a brief Statistical Profile of Bulgaria without a narrative describing the activities of the volunteers in the country.

Table 18: Structure of the Peace Corps CBJ Bulgaria Narratives

Sections	1992-93	1994	1995-03	2004-09	2010-13
Country Statistics	X	X	X	X	X
Country History/Program Overview	X	X	X	X	Dates only
Resources: Volunteers and Program Funds	X	X	X	X	X
Host Country/Peace Corps Initiatives	X	X			
Program Focus				X	
Programs by Sector/Volunteer Focus	X	X	X	X	Names only
Program Highlights & Accomplishments	X	X			
Outlook	X				
Quotes				X	

In 1991 the outlook for Bulgaria was that Peace Corps can assist with the "need for rapid change" in the country through "significant contributions" in the development of English teaching, agriculture, small business development, and the environment (CBJ-FY 1992:137-138). Peace Corps anticipated launching two projects - English teaching (starting in 1991) and agriculture and small business (starting in 1992) aimed to help with: (1) the shortage of trained English teachers following the announcement that Russian is no longer a compulsory language, (2) working with individual farmers to help them understand **how the free enterprise system** works, and (3) support for the **growing private sector** of the economy (CBJ-FY 1992:137-138).

The English teaching or Education project and the Small Business Development project started as anticipated, although the focus on agriculture was dropped. The Environment Project was delayed until 1995. In 1996, when the economy crashed, there seems to be a realization that changes were not going to occur quickly:

The post-communist Bulgarian economy has encountered significant challenges while attempting to transition to a market-oriented economic system and **to decentralize government services**. Inflation and unemployment is high and shortages of food and fuel

are widespread. Environmental degradation is rampant because concerns for **economic recovery and growth have overshadowed most efforts aimed at protecting the environment.** (CBJ-FY 1997:133, emphasis mine)

Beginning in 2003 the rhetoric about Bulgaria's transition needs changed from a narrow focus on economic development and structural reform to a broader focus on "transformation of the political, economic and social systems to create stability, prosperity and opportunity" and "**Western integration,**" meaning membership in the EU and NATO (CBJ-FY 2004:69, emphasis mine). In addition to the English language education (for now both primary and secondary students), community economic development (formerly small-business development), and environment projects, Peace Corps announces that it plans to "...begin a new program in youth development in response to the country's changing developmental priorities" (CBJ-FY 2004:69).

In 2004, in anticipation of Bulgaria's entry in the EU in 2007, Peace Corps began to highlight the importance of Bulgaria for the stability in the region and the challenge of helping the country to evolve into an example for its neighbors of how "**...open societies committed to ethnic tolerance** achieve more – economically, socially and politically" (CBJ-FY 2007:87, emphasis mine). The Business Development program has a new focus on community and organizational development with volunteers "**...striv[ing] to build greater cooperation** at the grass-roots level as Bulgarian communities **work towards a democratic civil society and improved quality of life**" (CBJ-FY 2006:79-80, emphasis mine).⁷⁸ The same rhetoric was present in the remaining CBJs.

⁷⁸ The Community and Organizational Development project was created after the merger of the Community and Economic Development and Environment projects. In Bulgaria, the COD project was considered to be a new type of project sector altogether. Peace Corps HQs, however, listed it under the Business Development sector rather than the Environment or an 'Other' sector category.

Altogether, the rhetoric in the CBJs suggests that the Peace Corps/Bulgaria changed its development focus from assistance with the transition goal of building a “free” market economy with decentralized government services (neoliberal mechanism) to assistance with the transition goal of building a democracy understood as civil society (counter-neoliberal mechanism). Between 1991 and 2002, volunteers in the Business Development program spread “...knowledge of the market economy and business techniques...and technical advice to local private businesses and state and municipal enterprises **in the process of privatizing**” (CBJ FY 1993:171, emphasis mine). The Education volunteers provided “...English language instruction, which Bulgarians view as **a critical means of integrating into international business and commercial activities**” (CBJ-FY 1999:63, emphasis mine). The Environment volunteers dealt with the negative consequences of economic recovery and growth.

After 2003, Peace Corps’ efforts contributed to openness, ethnic tolerance, civil society, and community cooperation, which aligned closer with the transition goal of building a democracy. In addition to teaching English, the Education volunteers organized “diversity trainings” (CBJ-FY 2005:78). The Business Development volunteers “...work with local governments and NGOs to instill project viability, to promote economic progress, and **to strengthen citizens’ participation** in community business activities” (CBJ-FY 2004:70, emphasis mine). The activities of the Youth Development volunteers “...gave youth greater fulfillment and increased **sense of civic responsibility**” (CBJ-FY 2005:80, emphasis mine). In fact, all volunteers were expected to “...partner with change agents in their communities to identify local needs, create development strategies, and **build a civil society through broad-based community cooperation**” (CBJ-FY 2006:79, emphasis mine).

The shift in focus and project changes follow the 2002 announcements by the European Commission that Bulgaria has a functioning market economy and during the period of negotiations for EU membership (2000 – 2004). In this sense the change in focus is embedded in efforts to assist Bulgaria's move towards European integration, which has become the new expression of the transition goals and as such continued to "...provide compelling reasons for Peace Corps involvement" (CBJ-FY 2003:39). Specifically, the post-2002 discourse highlights that English Language proficiency continued to be a national priority, that communities needed help to effectively access and use EU structural funds (neoliberal mechanism), that there is a need for "investment" in Bulgaria's youth, who are the future community and national leaders in the EU. Then after Bulgaria's entry in the EU, on January 1, 2007, Peace Corps' rationale to stay was that "...much work remains to be done, particularly with **underdeveloped populations and in rural communities**" (CBJ-FY 2009:76, emphasis mine). The latter is an indication that Peace Corps had positioned itself to address the problems of growing structural and social inequalities in the country (counter-neoliberal value).

While the goals and activities of Peace Corps/Bulgaria changed over the years, the CBJ rhetoric is consistent in focusing primarily on Goal 1 (development needs). There are only four references to Goal 2 and Goal 3 (cross-cultural exchange). The first is an acknowledgement that these goals "while of equal value are less quantifiable" (CBJ-FY 1992). Then, there is a mention that the Education volunteers were expected to give lectures on American culture and that in fact a number of them "... have established English Clubs for students, which encourage a broader understanding of American culture through discussions, movies, sports events, and guest speakers" (CBJ-FY 1996). The third reference is a quotation by a Bulgarian official: "Peace Corps Volunteers' dedication to this noble cause is impressive. Across thousands of kilometers,

they **build stable bridges between the two cultures and peoples** through mutual respect and understanding” (Daniel Valtchev, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education and Science in CBJ-FY 2009:77, emphasis mine).

The CBJ focus on Goal 1 to the exclusion of Goal 2 and 3 – the reciprocal goals of Peace Corps – emphasizes the purpose of the volunteers as objects of development (neoliberal mechanism).

To the New Volunteers

In the Welcome Books, the Peace Corps development rhetoric is most explicit in the welcome letter by the country director and in the description of the history and programs of Peace Corps/Bulgaria. In comparison to the CBJs that speak of Peace Corps’ “significant contributions” in Bulgaria, the language in the welcome books is toned down and the volunteers are expected to play only a “small but valuable role”:

Peace Corps Volunteers are playing **a small but valuable role** here in Bulgaria during **a difficult period of change and transition**. Peace Corps Volunteers are at the core of the **important exchange of knowledge and experience** between our two people and are truly bringing **the gap of understanding between our two nations**. What an exciting time to be part of such a noble cause! (Welcome Letter by R. Steven Taylor, Country Director (2000 – 2002) in 2002 Welcome Book, emphasis mine)

The above quote, clearly reiterates all three Peace Corps Goals, and especially Goals 2 and 3 (the gap of understanding between our two nations). The specific transition needs of the country are left unspecified but the use of “exchange” of knowledge and experience rather than “transfer” of knowledge and experience suggest that Peace Corps meets the developmental needs

of both countries/peoples (indication for a two-way technical learning = counter-neoliberal mechanism). The same paragraph about the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria is included in the remaining welcome books with some small changes:

Peace Corps Volunteers are playing a small but valuable role here in Bulgaria during **a critical period of social, economic, and political change. While the burden of this change galls heaviest on the Bulgarians themselves**, the work that you carry out, facilitating an exchange of knowledge and experience between our two people, **will make a very real difference in many people's lives, yours included.** (Welcome Letter by Carl Hammerdorfer, Country Director (2002 - 2007) in 2003 Welcome Book, emphasis mine)

The notion of “transition” is replaced with “social, economic, and political change,” and there is a stronger emphasis on the role of volunteers as facilitators of change. The idea that the volunteers themselves will benefit from their service - *a very real difference in many people's lives, yours included* – suggest again that the volunteers are not only the object but the subject of development efforts. The ending “yours included”, however, is removed from later editions of the welcome book and with it the notion of a two-way technical learning (counter-neoliberal mechanism).

Both the 2002 and 2003 descriptions of the programs highlight that the country needs that Peace Corps is trying to assist with are at the local level:

Peace Corps Volunteers in Bulgaria face the exciting, challenging, and rewarding experience of working together with their Bulgarian colleagues to rediscover and reinforce the Bulgarian traditions of **community action, local decision making, and creatively solving community problems** to create a better world for future generations.

All Peace Corps Volunteers are also members of the communities where they live and have the opportunity to contribute to those **communities' development**. (2002 Welcome Book: 9, emphasis mine)

This is a departure from the development rhetoric in the CBJs that focus on how Peace Corps programming addresses national level developmental priorities. The connection between the local volunteer efforts and the transition progress is made in the 2007 Welcome Book. Here, the continued presence of Peace Corps in Bulgaria, as an EU country, is linked first to the growing structural and social inequalities in the country and second to the need for business development:

Bulgaria's rapid development has exacerbated a host of socioeconomic problems, including a quickly **growing development gap between cities and rural areas**, high unemployment and poverty (particularly in more remote areas and among the elderly), youth disenfranchisement, degradation of educational institutions that have not adapted to the changing realities, **separation of minority groups from mainstream society**, and a limited understanding of a market economy and entrepreneurial skills. (2007 Welcome Book:10, emphasis mine)

In response to these needs, existing sector programs are modified so that volunteers now focus their assistance on minority populations and disadvantaged groups. In addition, all volunteers are encouraged to participate in new agency-wide anti-trafficking and HIV/AIDS initiatives. The paradox is that while in the 2007 Welcome Book the pursuit of "rapid development" is the cause of the problems, in the 1991 CBJ outlook "rapid change" was the need or goal that Peace Corps was called to assist with. In essence, the solution has become the problem.

A new passage in the Welcome Letter also explains that the country's needs are best addressed through changes in the site selection and placement strategy:

*While Bulgaria has joined the European Union (EU), **our site selection and placement strategy is to place most Volunteers in remote and underserved communities** that are at the bottom of the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Index. These are the communities with the greatest need, where opportunities and resources are limited, and where income, health, education and opportunity lag far behind the many more developed cities and towns in Bulgaria. Challenges in these communities are much more like those one would encounter in a developing country. This translates into greater physical, mental, and institutional challenges for our Volunteers—and ultimately a richer experience. (Welcome Letter by Carl Hammerdorfer, Country Director (2002 – 2007) in 2007 Welcome Book:2, emphasis mine)*

The volunteer site placement data confirms that since 1991 there was a general trend of moving volunteers from larger to smaller sites "...where Peace Corps Volunteers can have significant and rewarding impact" (Peace Corps Bulgaria 2007:13). Only, the PCR volunteers were an exception to the urban-to-rural trend since almost all of them worked in the capital and larger cities.

The 2008 and 2009 Welcome Letters and program descriptions are almost identical to the 2007 one with one notable difference. There is a new section on "Core Expectations for Peace Corps Volunteers," right after the Welcome Letter and before the description of Peace Corps/Bulgaria History and Programs. Among the 10 expectations # 4 underscores the connection between development (Goal 1) and cultural integration and understanding (Goal 3), while # 9 and #10 articulate Goal 2 and 3 as a public diplomacy role for the volunteers. Other

expectations highlight the importance of mutuality in learning, cooperation and respect for the local people and ways of being (# 2, 4, 6, and 7) and as such exemplify counter-neoliberal values, practices and subjectivity. The only expectation that expresses a neoliberal value is the expectation that volunteers take personal responsibility for their health, safety and well being (#8). Below is the list of all Core Expectations for Peace Corps Volunteers:

1. Prepare your personal and professional life to make a commitment to serve abroad for a full term of 27 months
2. Commit to improving the quality of life of the people with whom you live and work; and, in doing so, share your skills, adapt them, and learn new skills as needed [indicates two-way technical learning, counter-neoliberal subjectivity]
3. Serve where the Peace Corps asks you to go, under conditions of hardship, if necessary, and with the flexibility needed for effective service
4. **Recognize that your successful and sustainable development work is based on the local trust and confidence you build by living in, and respectfully integrating yourself into, your host community and culture** [Goal 3 as a prerequisite of Goal 1; counter-neoliberal subjectivity]
5. Recognize that you are responsible 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for your personal conduct and professional performance
6. Engage with host country partners in a spirit of cooperation, mutual learning, and respect [counter-neoliberal values]
7. Work within the rules and regulations of the Peace Corps and the local and national laws of the country where you serve [counter-neoliberal subjectivity]
8. Exercise judgment and personal responsibility to protect your health, safety, and well-being and that of others [neoliberal value]
9. **Recognize that you will be perceived, in your host country and community, as a representative of the people, cultures, values, and traditions of the United States of America** [public diplomacy function; Goal 2]
10. **Represent responsively the people, cultures, values, and traditions of your host country and community to people in the United States both during and following your service** [public diplomacy function; Goal 3].” (2009 Peace Corps/Bulgaria Welcome Book, p.7-8)

To the Bulgarian Public

The analysis of the Peace Corps discourse to the Bulgarian public is based on 2011 documents from the 20/50 anniversary celebrations (prior to the announcement later that year that the mission will close in 2013) and 2012 and 2013 documents that celebrated the transition of Peace Corps from Bulgaria. These documents are directed primarily at the general Bulgarian public and feature program descriptions and short pieces and speeches from volunteers and local partners. Since the content by the volunteers and local partners was approved for inclusion by the Peace Corps staff I treat the whole documents as part of the official Peace Corps/Bulgaria development discourse.

2011 20th Anniversary Celebration

The 20th anniversary celebration in 2011 came after a 2009 impact study of the Education project and the compilation of various impact statistics at the regional and national level for the last twenty years known as *Oblast Impact Sheets*. According to Peace Corps these numbers capture the “development” outcomes of Peace Corps’ presence, “[b]ut as you ask any volunteer, the numbers do not paint the whole picture. Each Peace Corps experience is different. It’s not just about the work you do, but the friends you make and the journey along the way” (Peace Corps Bulgaria 2011 Special Anniversary Issue, p.4). The overall sentiment of the celebration was that both the goals, as well as the process of development matters:

When we asked ourselves **what makes us unique as a development organization**, we saw that there is nothing that can replace an American living in a Bulgarian village or city for 2 years. Each Volunteer has had their own favorite stories. Each has had a Bulgarian grandma and grandpa for whom they have become “my child.” Each has had his/her best

Bulgarian friends in town. (Nathaniel Broekman 20th Anniversary speech, Education Volunteer in Yambol and Response Volunteer in Sofia (2009 – 2012) in Peace Corps Bulgaria 2011 Special Anniversary Issue, p.10, emphasis mine)

The acceptance of the volunteer by the local community “as their own”, implies that Goal 2 (Better understanding of Americans by the local people) has been successfully accomplished, while the fact that the volunteers had reciprocated by finding best friends implies that Goals 3 (Better understanding of the local people by the Americans) was also successfully accomplished. In this sense the anniversary rhetoric by Peace Corps underscores the importance of all Core Peace Goals.

2012 Legacy Celebration

At the legacy celebration in Sofia, Bulgaria, prior to the closure of the program, the development rhetoric incorporated Goal 1 (how the Bulgarians received technical assistance) and Goal 3 (how the Americans improved their cultural knowledge). The latter implies an unequal exchange (neoliberal mechanism): “Our time together is coming to a close, but that was, after all, the goal – to transfer our skills so that you might continue without us [Goal 1], and for the Volunteers to return home in order to share Bulgarian culture with their homeland [Goals 3]” (Vaune Hough-Snee, B26 Education volunteer in Kubrat and Sofia in 2012 Legacy Celebration program).

The Peace Corps Bulgaria Legacy Book – *Together on the Road to Change: 1991 – 2013* - from now on referred to as PC/B Legacy Book, covers all 3 goals but Goal 1 is covered to a much greater extent compared to Goals 2 and 3 (Goal 1 gets 32 pages of coverage, while Goal 2 and 3 only one page each). The different Peace Corps sector projects (the work of the volunteers)

are presented as efforts to support various government policies and priorities of Bulgaria as a country in transition to democracy and market economy and as an EU Member State. For example, the Education project supported the national priority of English Language foreign education after 1989 including the initiative of Ministry of Education and Science to introduce early foreign language education at the primary level up from Grade 2, as well as the European framework for education, training, and qualifications. The Community Economic Development project "...complemented the regional development policy and the small and medium enterprises policy of the Bulgarian government" (PC/B Legacy Book. n.d: 22). The Community and Organizational Development project "...supported the national priorities for improvement of the quality of life and civil society development, including assistance in the field of local business development and environmental protection" (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:26). The Youth Development project addressed priority areas in the field of youth development and child protection including "non-formal learning experiences, promotion of social inclusion of disadvantaged youth, and creating opportunities for positive interaction between youth from different backgrounds" (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:30). Only the Environment projects and the PCR program were lacking a link to a specific national policy or priority. In the *2002 Framework Agreement between Peace Corps and the Ministry of Environment and Water*, however, it is clearly stated that the Environment project will assist with the implementation of the Bulgarian national policy in the field of environmental protection at the regional and local levels. As for the PCR program, since those volunteers worked in the same areas as the sector project volunteers, this program was also contributing to the national priorities and policies established for the sector projects.

These priorities and policies, however, appeared to be irrelevant in the eyes of both the volunteers and local partners who saw the purpose (and impact) of Peace Corps' development at the individual level:

- **Volunteer:** *“For me, the most encouraging development had to do with **how people** open themselves to different ideas and new techniques”* (Janelle Marzdorf, YD and PCR Volunteer in Chirpan, Targovishte and Burgas, 2009 – 2011, 2012-2013 in PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:35, emphasis mine);
- **Partner:** *“Their goal [of the volunteers] is **to unlock that potential and from there it is up to us to develop it, to succeed in preserving our acquired knowledge and ability to use it in the future**”* (Petya Darelova, Student at the Sofia University, former student of an Education Volunteer in Rakitovo in 2012 Legacy Celebration program, emphasis mine).

More importantly, the goal of the volunteers was perceived as both transfers of technical skills and knowledge (Goal 1) as well as “emotion work” directed at attitudinal change:

- **Volunteer:** *“Of the goals and intentions of the Peace Corps and the Peace Corps Legacy program is, one of the most important remains to **instill the passion and desire to create sustainable change, not only in the communities in which we serve but in the lives of the volunteers as well**”* (Eric Helms, COD volunteer and PCR volunteer in Bratsigovo, Provadia and Sofia, 2006 – 2008, 2011- 2012 in 2012 Legacy Celebration program, emphasis mine);
- **Partner:** *“We have learned a lot over the past 22 years. What is most important is that **we learned to dream big and fight for our dreams to come true; to believe in the success,** as we are not alone, because **together, Volunteers and counterparts,** we can find a*

solution to every situation” (Teodora Kaleynska, Chair of the Board of the European Information Center in Veliko Tarnovo and Leda Kuneva, Junior Counselor at Leadership Academy GLOW in 2012 Legacy Celebration program, emphasis mine).

In the above quotes, both the volunteers and the local partners underscore the counter-neoliberal values of mutual development (not only in the communities in which we serve but in the lives of the volunteers as well) and cooperation (together, Volunteers and counterparts, we can find a solution to every situation).

Apart from “doing” development, the volunteers engendered change by simply “being,” because as volunteers their role in Bulgaria was to serve as volunteer role models: “Together we have learned the challenges **of voluntarism** and the immense rewards that come when overcoming these challenges” (Eric Helms, COD volunteer and PCR volunteer in Bratsigovo, Provadia and Sofia, 2006 – 2008, 2011- 2012 - 2012 Legacy Celebration program, emphasis mine).

The introduction and conclusion of the PC/B Legacy Book - the section on the “US Peace Corps’ Legacy in Bulgaria” - are more balanced in their coverage of all 3 Goals. In the executive summary Country Director Mikel Herrington, notes that, “Hundreds of volunteers have dedicated two or more years of their lives to support the country’s efforts to embrace the values of **democracy**, leadership skills, **friendship** and respect for others” (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:3, emphasis mine). At the end, he lists three Peace Corps legacies that will remain after the phasing out of the program: (1) **the bonds** forged through the service of Volunteers with the Bulgarian people will be unbroken, (2) **the resources** developed by Volunteers will continue to be utilized by Bulgarian organizations, and (3) **the institutional values** of Peace Corps will continue through organizations created through the Peace Corps’ inspiration (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:

59). The bonds represent Goals 2 and 3, while the resources and institutional values Goal 1. An interesting reordering of the Goals, given the actual content dedicated to each Goal, coupled with the acknowledgement that: “Through their personal and professional relationships, Volunteers have transferred skills and knowledge to those in their adopted communities. The not so big secret of Peace Corps is that this transference, which is our first goal, is also one that is **reciprocal**” (Mikel Herrington, Country Director (2010 – 2013) in PC/B Legacy Book n.d.: 59, emphasis mine). The main sentiment is that above all Peace Corps/Bulgaria has remained true to the original Peace Corps mission: to promote peace and friendship (counter-neoliberal values).

A content analysis of the vocabulary of all CBJs, Welcome Books, and Legacy Documents, visualizes the differences in the Peace Corps development rhetoric by audience. The impression for the American public is that Peace Corps/Bulgaria was a Business development and English program (see Figure 30). For the volunteers and the Bulgarian public, Peace Corps/Bulgaria was a Youth and Community Development program (see Figure 31 and Figure 32). Altogether, the going forward discourse of Peace Corps (the CBJs and welcome books) emphasizes one-way interaction (transfer of skills= neoliberal mechanism), while the looking back (celebratory/legacy documents) discourse emphasizes two-way interaction (reciprocal transfer of skills plus cross-cultural exchange = counter-neoliberal mechanism).

Figure 30: Word Cloud of CBJs, 1992 – 2009



Note: The Word Cloud excludes the words Peace, Corps, Volunteers, and Bulgaria.

Figure 31: Word Cloud of Welcome Books



Note: The Word Cloud excludes the words Peace, Corps, Volunteers, and Bulgaria.

Figure 32: Word Cloud of Legacy Documents



Note: The Word Cloud excludes the words Peace, Corps, Volunteers, and Bulgaria.

BULGARIAN GOVERNMENT DISCOURSE

Aside from the legal documents – the Country Agreement and the Framework Agreements – there are very few documents that capture the official development rhetoric by the Bulgarian (BG) Government. Below is an analysis of speeches by government officials on the occasions of the 20th Peace Corps anniversary and the closure of the program. They reflect the official assessment of the BG Government about the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria’s post-socialist transition.

On the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of Peace Corps in Bulgaria, which coincided with the 50th Anniversary of Peace Corps worldwide in 2011, President Georgi Parvanov awarded Peace Corps the highest presidential honor - the Medal of Honor – “[f]or its merit and contribution to the development and expansion of the partnership between the Republic of Bulgaria and the United States of America in the sphere of local development and youth education.”

In his remarks the President noted that:

*Bulgarian-American relations have a long, over centuries of history and rich traditions, but in recent years these relations have reached **a new quality - the level of strategic allies.***

[...]

*In recent years of active and deepening interaction, **those who contributed particularly strongly to the development of human contacts between our two countries and peoples** were the volunteers from the Peace Corps.*

[...]

*Since Bulgaria has come a long way to membership in the European Union, the scope of work of the **Peace Corps changed in an effort to respond more fully to the new needs of the country** and the organization currently works in the areas of community and organizational development and youth education. Peace Corps in Bulgaria has a priority to work with small, remote, developing communities.*

[...]

*It would not be exaggeration to say that the activities of the Peace Corps in Bulgaria have become **a valuable tool to build understanding and friendship between Bulgarians and Americans.*** (Bulgarian President Georgi Parvanov, March 9, 2011 Speech, emphasis mine)

The President clearly acknowledged that Peace Corps supported the process of EU integration (neoliberal mechanism) and that at the time continued to meet the developmental needs of the country. His remarks also point that the Bulgarian government saw Peace Corps as a tool that supported the new geopolitical orientation of the country by improving the relationships between Bulgarians and Americans (counter-neoliberal value). In this sense, the Bulgarian government recognized Peace Corps both as a development program and as instrument of foreign policy. In his response to the President, Ambassador Wallick also acknowledged the contributions of Peace Corps for the improved relationships between the two countries (counter-neoliberal value). Word Clouds of the two speeches at the honorary sign ceremony are shown in Figure 33 and Figure 34.

Figure 33: Word Cloud of the Speech by the President of Bulgaria Georgi Parvanov



Figure 34: Word Cloud of the Speech by the U.S. Ambassador to Bulgaria James Warlick



On the same occasion, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs held a special reception and Minister Nikolaj Mladenov expressed appreciation for the role that Peace Corps had played in the transition of Bulgaria (Goals 1).⁷⁹ At the same event, the Ministry Spokesman Vesela

⁷⁹ Source: TV7. 2011. *20 Years of Peace Corps in Bulgaria* (in Bulgarian). March 2. Retrieved October 19, 2015 http://tv7.bg/20-%D0%B3%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B8-%D0%9A%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%BF%D1%83%D1%81-%D0%BD%D0%B0-%D0%BC%D0%B8%D1%80%D0%B0-%D0%B2-%D0%91%D1%8A%D0%BB%D0%B3%D0%B0%D1%80%D0%B8%D1%8F_l.1_i.226762.html#.V500QuSaRS m

Cherneva noted that the volunteers in the country act as world ambassadors of both America and Bulgaria.⁸⁰ The latter is an acknowledgement of the public diplomacy function of the organization, which is seen as a two-way process – for the benefit of both America and Bulgaria – rather than for the benefit only of America.

At the final 2012 Legacy Celebration the Bulgarian government presented a *Certificate of Contribution to the Modernization of the Administration and the Building of a Civil Society*.⁸¹ Therefore, the final recognition is for the work of Peace Corps after 2002 rather than for all 22 years of service as it is acknowledging Peace Corps' role only in the building of a civil society (transition to democracy) but not its earlier efforts to support the building of a market economy. More importantly it recognized Peace Corps as a force of modernization.

VOLUNTEER DISCOURSE

Analysis of the public volunteer discourse is based on the *22 Years of Service: United States Peace Corps in Bulgaria 1991-2013* book published by the Peace Corps/Bulgaria B27 Legacy Book Committee (PCBBTSLBC) and from now on referred to as the Volunteer Legacy Book. There are 24 contributions: an introduction by the committee, 21 stories, poems, and an obituary by volunteers from 10 different groups and five programs, two contributions by Bulgarian local partners, and two contributions by US staff members.⁸² The idea for this legacy project is "...to share a collective and holistic view of the Bulgarian communities' impact on us

⁸⁰ Source: Speshno!info. 2011. *More than 1100 Volunteers from the U.S. at Home in 20 Years* (in Bulgarian). March 2. Retrieved October 29, 2015(<http://speshno.info/news.php?id=190877>).

⁸¹ Source: Balcanec.bg. 2012. *Peace Corps Completes its Work in the Country*. October 9. Retrieved October 19, 2015 (<http://balkanec.bg/korpusat-na-mira-priklyuchva-rabotata-si-u-nas-9725.html>).

⁸² Contributing Volunteers are from the B4 (1), B7 (1), B8 (1), B10 (1), B12 (1), B24 (1), B25 (2), B26 (5) and B27 (4) groups from TEFL (13), SBD (1), YD (2), COD (2), and PCR (1).

as volunteers” (PCBBTSLBC 2012:6) that answer the question “Why serve?” and “does not reflect any position of Peace Corps or the U.S. Government.”

The volunteer stories focus on how the volunteer managed the challenges of meeting Goals 1, 2 and 3. How they struggled to affect meaningful change (Goal 1). How they struggled to make themselves understood and accepted by the local people (Goal 2). How they struggled to understand and accept the local people and their way of life and to tell about it (Goal 3). The main challenge of Goal 1 was how to deal with dysfunction. Some took successful actions to remedy a challenging situation:

It was not just a different standard of living; **it was a different way of thinking about life and what is, or is not, possible.** [...] The common areas of the hospital suffered from the same deficit of individual concern, not worth the bother. [...] The problem was that no one owned it[a broken window in the apartment block]. [...] **I took up a collection to share the cost, and we had it fixed.** (Bruce McDonald, B12 TEFL, 2002-2004 in PCBBTSLBC 2012:29, emphasis mine)

The featured local partners shared that the volunteer actions inspired them to be more proactive in ways that exemplify counter-neoliberal and mixed (counter-neoliberal and neoliberal) values.

- **Counter-neoliberal:** “I liked her **way of thinking** [of the volunteer....] younger and funny, she taught me how to find the positive things in any situation [...] I became more confident in my idea of **changing myself and my town.** [...] **I learned a lot from them and I hope that they have learned something from me.**” (Yulia Kanazireva, TEFL Counterpart in PCBBTSLBC 2012:78, emphasis mine);

- **Mixed:** “It is **inspiration**, which pulls us through our lives [...] You [the volunteers] have taught us **how to be active and responsible for our own development**” (Dimitar Tatarski, Counterpart in PCBBTSLBC 2012:80, emphasis mine).

In both quotations the local partners see themselves as agents of collective empowerment: “changing myself and my town” and “for our own development” (counter-neoliberal practice). The first partner also hoped that the volunteer had learned something in return, meaning that she preferred to be engaged in a two-way reciprocal exchange (counter-neoliberal value). The second partner linked the improved community well-being to the notion of responsibility (neoliberal value).

Other volunteers who were not as successful in bringing changes resorted to gaining better understanding of the situation by immersing themselves in the local way of living (finding the change within them):

- “Balgarska rabota. [...] Seems to mean that nothing works and it’s nobody’s fault, simply the tragicomic fate of this country, which only leans further towards the comic when someone smugly thinks they can alter that fate. [...] And **even if one volunteer can’t move buses, she can still ride them.**” (Huelo Dunn, B26 TEFL, 2010-2012 in PCBBTSLBC 2012:41, emphasis mine)
- “...my Peace Corps service would **be much more about me** and the changes that would occur within me. As selfish as that might sound, I realized that changes had to occur within me before I could make an impact or even have an effective service.” (Susie Ro, B27 YD, 2011 – 2013 in PCBBTSLBC 2012:49, emphasis mine).

Altogether, the main message is that in the process of trying to affect change in the Bulgarian environment, the volunteers discovered that they had to first change themselves. The

latter confirms that in fact the two-way learning process that some local partners were hoping for had occurred: “**I changed and learned so much about myself and the world.** I formed lifelong friendships and I have memories that will last me forever” (Christyann Helm, B10 TEFL, 2000 – 2002 in PCBBTSLBC 2012: 66, emphasis mine). The notion that the volunteer learning process is both externally (the world) and internally oriented (myself) can be thought of a latent Reverse Goal 3*: To help promote a better understanding of Americans of themselves. The sentiment that the Peace Corps experience is a personal journey of knowing oneself through interaction with foreigners mirrors the “Who You Are” Peace Corps Public Service Announcement (PSA) shown in Figure 35.

Figure 35: 2011 "Who You Are" Peace Corps PSA



Source: Peace Corps 2016. "PSA." Retrieved on February 12, 2016 (<http://www.peacecorps.gov/media/psa/print/>).
Note: The PSA was partially cropped.

In the whole Volunteer Legacy Book there is only one reference to the goals of transition and it concerns the goal of democracy building (counter-neoliberal value):

There is a long history of being governed by outsiders, so now they are taking, sometimes convoluted, steps towards **the ultimate goals of unprecedented, for them, democracy.**

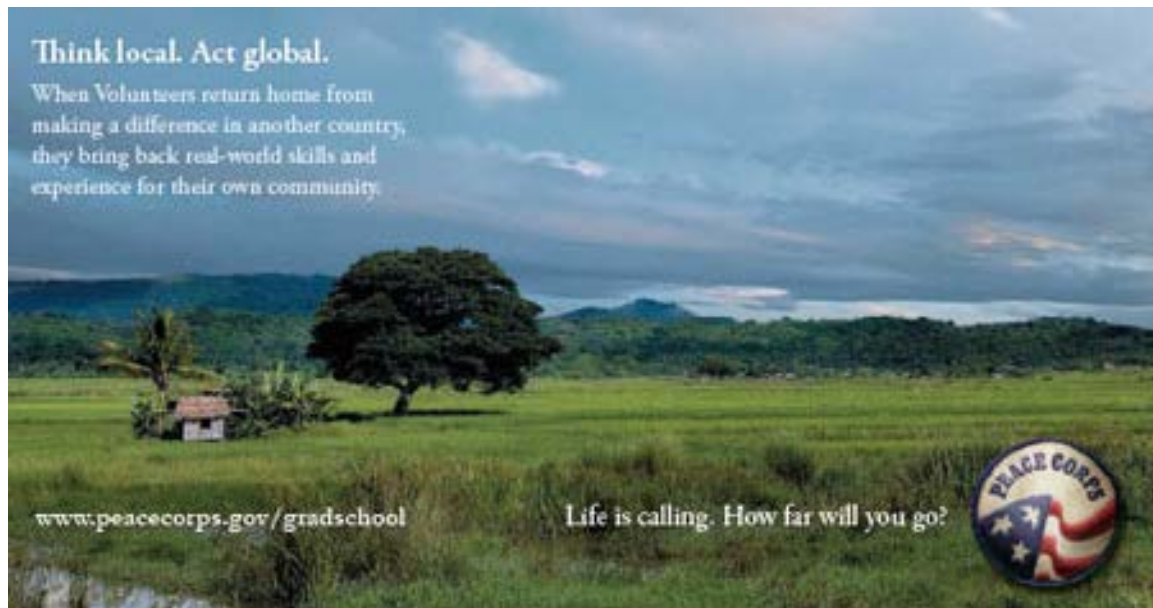
And this was one of my surprises – how long and arduous the process can be, and the range of emotions, objections, negativity, hope and desire, it can evoke. (Mary Smith, B27 COD, 2011 – 2013 in PCBBTSLBC 2012:17, emphasis mine).

Related to the omission of the goals of transition is that the framing of the collection suggests that the purpose of Peace Corps is on a larger scale. The volunteer and local partner stories are framed by the two U.S. staff member contributions, who are also former PCVs. The collections opens with the notion that Peace Corps has taken the role of “**training the next generation**” of development workers, diplomats, politicians and more informed American citizens, a sort of an implicit Reverse Goal 1*: To help the people of America in meeting their need for trained men and women. This is an example of the *interpenetration of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms*. As a training ground for future development workers Peace Corps is a career step and exemplifies the neoliberal professionalization of international development volunteer programs. As a two-way technical learning it is form of a reciprocal exchange that supports equalizing power dynamics between the development parties and as such represents a mechanisms for the creation of counter-neoliberal subjectivity.

The Epilogue offers another reverse logic: that it is not only the volunteers that are affecting change but everyone in the Peace Corps community and not only at the local level: “We – **all of us** in the Peace Corps community [volunteers and staff] – constitute a powerful force for opportunity, social equity, and **global** prosperity, today more so than ever” (Carl Hammerdorfer, Country Director (2003 – 2007) in PCBBTSLBC 2012:86, emphasis mine). The purpose of Peace Corps, therefore, goes beyond the goals of the post-socialist transition. Peace Corps aims to affect change for global justice and well-being (counter-neoliberal values). The

level of Peace Corps development is raised from the local to the global. The latter is also a reflection of a Peace Corps PSA called “Global” shown in Figure 36.

Figure 36: 2011 "Global" Peace Corps PSA



Source: Peace Corps 2016. “PSA.” Retrieved on February 12, 2016 (<http://www.peacecorps.gov/media/psa/print/>).
Note: The PSA was partially cropped.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the public discourses revealed both similarities and differences in the development rhetoric by actors, and especially by audience. The development rhetoric by all actors also indicated simultaneous working of both neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms.

The Joint Legal, U.S. Government/Peace Corps, and Bulgarian Government discourses present a picture where the design and deployment of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program was a collaborative project at the highest level. The initial assessment for the program and consequent improvements were negotiated during meetings between Peace Corps representatives and

representatives of the Bulgarian government at the ministry level. During those meetings, the parties identified country needs (policies and priorities) that Peace Corps/Bulgaria could address through its programming and site placement strategies.

The main differences in the discourses concern the rhetoric about the interaction between the Core Peace Corps Goals, the role of Peace Corps in the post-socialist transition, and the level of development supported by the Peace Corps program. The *Joint Legal discourse* focuses on the importance of mutual cooperation and benefit for both the U.S. and Bulgaria. All framework agreements specify expectations for Goal 1 and some agreements include expectations for Goals 2 and 3. None of the agreements includes language about the role of Peace Corps in the post-socialist transition.

The difference in timeframe for the three *U.S. Government/Peace Corps discourses* - towards the American public (1991 – 2009), the new volunteers (2002 – 2009), and the Bulgarian public (2011 – 2013) - illustrate an overall shift in the development focus from assistance with the building of an economy to assistance with the building of civil society and EU integration. Discourses to different audiences were around one or more of the Core Peace Corps Goals. The development rhetoric aimed at the American public (Congress) underscored the significant impact of the volunteers on Bulgaria's transition process (Goal 1).

The development rhetoric directed at the new volunteers focuses primarily on Goals 1 and 3. The volunteers are expected to engage in activities at the local community level and therefore to play a small role in affecting change at the national level. The main message is that successful development requires successful cultural integration. The volunteers are also reminded of their public diplomacy role. There were some hints that the volunteers acted as both subjects and objects of development.

The development rhetoric aimed at the Bulgarian public focuses on all three Goals. Here, Peace Corps presents the volunteer activities as supportive of the dual goals of transition with the strongest impact on relationship building as a result of the pursuit of Goals 2 and 3. In the PC/B Legacy Book there is also an acknowledgement that Goal 1 was also reciprocal (there is a two-way transfer of skills and knowledge from the volunteers to the local people and from the local people to the volunteers).

The development *rhetoric of the Bulgarian Government* acknowledges that Peace Corps has supported the transition to democracy (civil society building) but not the transition to market economy. The government also clearly acknowledges the role of the volunteers in public-diplomacy and of Peace Corps as a tool for U.S. foreign policy and for the modernization/Westernization of the country.

The development *rhetoric of the Volunteers* focuses on how the volunteer managed the challenges of meeting all Goals 1, 2 and 3. The implication, however, is that the Peace Corps experience is not only a cross-cultural but cross-technical leaning experience and that Peace Corps has a latent function of training the next generation of American development workers.

In the Joint Legal discourse volunteers were expected to contribute to development at various scales including at the local, regional, and national levels. In the U.S. Government/Peace Corps and BG Government discourses the volunteers were expected to work at the local level towards national policies and priorities. In the Volunteer Discourse the local work of the volunteers was seen within a personal and a global development perspective: “Be the change you want to see in the world”.

All types of public discourses incorporate the rhetoric of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal values and reference both neoliberal and counter-neoliberal practices and subjectivity. In some cases the mechanisms function in parallel and in others they interpenetrate each other. Overall, there is more evidence of counter-neoliberal mechanisms, with the exception of the Peace Corps discourse to the American Public/Congress. The latter may be reflective of the specifics of the audience as the Peace Corps funder and/or the much longer time period that is covered by the CBJs (1992-2009) compared to the other documents that capture the rhetoric of the 2000s and early 2010s. Table 19 includes examples of specific language in the discourses that indicates the working of neoliberal or counter-neoliberal mechanisms.

In the next chapter, I turn to the analysis of the private discourse about the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria or the perspectives of the volunteers, the local partners, and the local staff as captured through the web surveys, interviews, and focus groups for this research.

Table 19: Neoliberal and Counter-Neoliberal Mechanisms in the Public Discourses

Discourse	Neoliberal Mechanisms	Counter-Neoliberal Mechanisms
Join Legal	Practice: capacity building as a human a development approach that does not challenge neoliberalism (TEFL, CED, and COD)	Value: mutuality and cooperation Practice: cooperation (ENV) Subjectivity: working within (TEFL and CED); two-way technical learning (ENV and COD)
U.S. Gov.: CBJs	Value: free market and decentralization of government services ; Practice: privatization (SBD); EU structural funds (COD) Subjectivity: unequal exchange (Goal 1 over Goals 2 and 3)	Value: civil society Practice: environmentalism (ENV); broad-based community cooperation; citizen participation
U.S. Gov.: Welcome Books	Value: personal responsibility	Values: mutuality and cooperation Subjectivity: Goal 1 embedded in Goal 3; working within; two-way technical learning**; PCVs as Public diplomats for both the US and Bulgaria (reciprocity)
U.S. Gov.: Celebration	Subjectivity: unequal exchange (Goal 1 and 3; Goal 1 then Goals 2 and 3)	Values: democracy and friendship Subjectivity: reciprocal exchange (Goals 1, 2, and 3).
BG Gov.	Value/Practice: EU integration, modernization of the administration	Value/Practice: civil society building Subjectivity: mutual interaction; PCVs as Public diplomats for both the US and Bulgaria (reciprocity); reciprocal exchange (Goals 1, 2, and 3).
Volunteers	Value : personal responsibility Subjectivity: professionalization of Peace Corps service	Value: democracy, friendship, social equity and global prosperity Subjectivity: two-way technical learning**

CHAPTER 7: PRIVATE DISCOURSES ON THE ROLE OF PEACE CORPS

INTRODUCTION

The analysis of the private discourse about the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria is based on data from surveys, interviews and focus groups with the local staff, volunteers, and local partners on the following questions: “In your own words, how did you understand the purpose of the U.S. Peace Corps in Bulgaria? Did this purpose change overtime? How so?”, “What role did Peace Corps play in the post-socialist development (transformation) of Bulgaria?” and “If it were up to you when would you have closed the program? According to what criteria?” I begin with the staff, followed by the volunteers, and finish with the local partners. This order continues the direction from the previous chapter - from the international (the joint legal discourse) to the national (the U.S. and Bulgarian government discourses) – except that it includes only the national (the staff) and the local levels (the volunteers and the local partners).

THE LOCAL STAFF PERSPECTIVES

Flexible Application of the Core Peace Corps Goals

All staff members referred to the Core Peace Corps Goals in their answers about how they understood the purpose of Peace Corps in Bulgaria. Staff members, however, differed in their views about the relationship between the three goals and whether or not Peace Corps in fact should have come to Bulgaria in the first place. The latter was the opinion of two of the US staff members who reflected the position of the skeptics from the debate about Peace Corps’ expansion in Eastern Europe. One invoked the argument that Bulgaria was not a Third World

country, while the other that Peace Corps was not suited to assist with the specific challenges of the post-socialist transition:

*When I went there I had not reached a point where I felt that the US should not be in those countries, but when I got to Bulgaria I realized that even though Bulgaria at the time had just gone away from what I call the Soviet umbrella so to speak. You may not have seen it this way but that is how we saw it, then I realized after a while that **Bulgaria was not a Third World country. Bulgaria had a tremendous infrastructure, generally speaking very good roads, electrification, you name it.**[...] if I had anything to do with it, I would have never sent volunteers to Bulgaria or Hungary or some of those places because we have countries in this world, my God, that are much, much poorer...and have much lower level of skill. **Bulgarian people were just highly skilled.** (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine)*

*I really never saw that Peace Corps was a good fit for...Central Europe, you know, from the Baltics down to the Balkans. **It seemed like a bit of a forced fit.** It is not a strength or weakness of Peace Corps, it just wasn't designed...When it was designed during the Kennedy administration, **it wasn't designed for a country coming out of a socialist environment going into a market-economy.** (US Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)*

In contrast, while the Bulgarian staff also felt that Bulgaria was not a Third World country and that the post-socialist transition presented a different type of challenge, they were convinced that Peace Corps was equipped to meet it:

*For instance I visited Peace Corps Cambodia and Thailand. I think...it may be just my opinion but they had a very ...basic primary need for assistance which was close to fulfilling physical needs of people they worked with, while in Bulgaria most of the people that approached Peace Corps already were ...prone to learning more. They were open to new ideas. **They were not reinventing the wheel they just needed to enhance their skills rather than start from the very beginning.** (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview, emphasis mine)*

In the words of some of the staff Bulgaria was not in need of conventional type of development assistance but of re-development, re-organization, and re-thinking:

***...development is probably not the right term to use for Bulgaria and for EE** because development is something that you do in countries that lack infrastructure, where people are not educated, where they lack the basic necessities like clean water, etc., etc. For Bulgaria and Eastern Europe that was not true. All of these countries were highly developed in the sense that they had fairly complex infrastructures, including airports, transportation, energy production and distribution, communications. Everything was in*

place. The thing is that...what needed to happen was redevelopment. That is reorganizing the available resources in a way...according to market principles, so that they can kind of fit where they should be. [...] so in essence this type of...we are talking about redevelopment; we are not talking about development per se. now...the other side of development that Peace Corps brought was ...democracy building. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)

The Bulgarian staff also clarified that Peace Corps was flexible in how the Core Peace Corps Goals could be achieved. When Goal 1 - meet the needs for trained men and women of the local people - was discussed there was always an emphasis on how Peace Corps/Bulgaria tried to meet the changing country needs. The staff explained that this was accomplished by making changes in the programming and/or local partners and host communities:

- **Program change:** “... first the most urgent need was for **qualified English teachers** in Bulgaria. [...] people in the end of the 90s and then the beginning for the millennium they didn’t have as much knowledge about **project design and management** as they have now, so this was crucial. [...] and then and still we have huge need for **Health education.**” (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview, emphasis mine);
- **Partner change:** “...in the beginning of the 90s volunteers were provided **to the English language schools in big cities** where there were few or none native speakers while this has already changed by the 1990s,[...] with this change of the environment of course Peace Corps has also changed and responded in a different way by sending volunteers **to different places.** – Program Assistant, Interview; “What changed was... the focus of the programs **to like smaller and more isolated and underserved communities**” (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine).

In the Bulgarian context, the pursuit of Goal 2 - helps promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the people served - had the effect of countering the negative propaganda about America from the communist period, to the extent that “better understanding” meant that Peace Corps activities could promote more “positive” opinions of Americans. This was important especially for gaining the trust and acceptance of the older generations:

*I think that the first most important thing is again the fact that many, many thousands of Bulgarians had the opportunity to meet Americans and just to gain this firsthand experience with them and definitely **to develop more positive opinion or more understanding opinion of Americans** as ...people. Especially older generations that used to live in a system when America was the enemy and then... it is, I would say almost*

universal. I think that there are very few people who actually became more negative toward Americans after meeting and working or living with PCVs. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)

With the younger generations the issue was to enable a more realistic understanding of American society in contrast to the stereotypes from popular culture:

*PCVs have shaped in some particularly smaller communities local understanding of the perceptions of Americans because America is far from Bulgaria and most people built their perceptions from stereotypes, on Hollywood, on what they can actually see but not on real interactions so it seemed that that was one of the indirect effects of **creating a more positive, more friendly, more informal image of who Americans and what Americans are and in particular in regards to the diversity of the American society**⁸³ and the American culture. (BG APCD - Programming & Training, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Another interpretation of Goal 2 expanded the scope of the goal from “better understanding” to “better understanding and adoption” of positive American values and attitudes. For example, staff members mentioned often mentioned optimism - *“It’s like opening eyes for different opportunities, changing your mindset – if one door closes, there are few others probably opening over there”* (BG Program Assistant, Interview) - and voluntarism - *“...participating in voluntarism is an inherent American value that wasn’t that popular at the time in Bulgaria”* (BG APCD – Programming & Training, Interview) as two American values that Bulgarians should strive to adopt. In fact, the majority of the staff considered the adoption of American attitudes as part of Goal 1:

*Basically the purpose was to ...to convey knowledge, skills and attitudes, **to me attitudes are a very important portion of all the work that has been done** although most of the people don’t put too much attention on attitudes but for Bulgaria this is very important. This was conveying knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on the experience the American society has had for years, trying to give us different, to local communities, different perspectives and how we can work...**taking responsibility for our own lives.** (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)*

⁸³ Unfortunately, there is no data about the ethnic/racial profile of Bulgaria PCVs to support the notion that they were reflective of the diversity of the American society but knowing that Peace Corps in general is struggling to recruit minority volunteers it is more likely that the volunteer population was less diverse compared to the American society.

One staff member believed that successful transfers of technical skills could occur only after people have changed their attitudes. For example, in the YD program people first had to change their attitudes towards children with disabilities in order to make changes in the system and services that were available for them:

For instance, that is just an example. If you want to change societies' attitudes towards children with disabilities, all right that is the first step but then comes how, so then the last 3-4 years Peace Corps started sending more prepared volunteers: volunteers with experience in corresponding fields, rather than helping just changing the mindset. (BG Program Assistant, Interview)

The rhetoric of “changes in attitudes,” “changing the mindset,” “changing the mentality,” and “change in thinking” indicates that *the purpose of Peace Corps was to create new subjectivities* for the new post-socialist social reality. While in the examples positivism, voluntarism, and attitudes towards children with disabilities are neither neoliberal nor counter-neoliberal, the value of personal responsibility represents a neoliberal value. More importantly, they convey an image of Peace Corps partaking in a new modernization/social engineering project.

From a development perspective Goal 3 - to promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans – was also important for the successful implementation of Goal 1 because the volunteers needed to know the local language and culture in order to be able to “convey knowledge, skills, and attitudes”, especially in an environment when very few of the local people could communicate in English.

Like Goal 2, the pursuit of Goal 3, also had a specific post-socialist relevance. For example, the staff thought that Goal 3 was problematic when it was understood as a mandate for the volunteers to spy in the country: “***Some people were openly hostile and thought that this was a new spy program which is often an accusation of PCVs because why else you would want***

someone in a small town who could speak the language. It's just a spy. So, there was a lot of hostility around that" (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine).

This suspicion was stronger in the early years when the volunteers interacted more often with the personnel of the U.S. Embassy:

*At that time they invited us often at the residence of the deputy chief of mission, a big villa, and you see there: **the political office they are all talking to the volunteers, so clearly they exchange information** but the volunteers enjoyed that: there were hamburgers, Coke. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)*

The fact that Peace Corps/Bulgaria called the volunteers "change agents" [*agenti na promyanata*] when explaining the Peace Corps approach to development might have helped perpetuate rather than counter this misunderstanding. It was not until the late 2000s, when the staff began to refer to the role of the volunteers as "community development workers." Interestingly, while the notion that the volunteers were secret agents presented challenges at the local level it was not a concern for the government, which had already made the decision to embark on a geo-political reorientation to the West:

*Later on we signed an agreement with the Forestry Agency for volunteer support on the Bulgarian side and when Ken [Hill] and the Director of the Agency shook hands, Ken thanked for their support, while the Director of the Agency, who was up in the political ranks, said "**We have always supported your agents.**" (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)*

In retrospect, the local staff believed that some of the local government administrations wanted to have a Peace Corps Volunteer precisely as a symbol of their Western politics:

...in Bulgaria I think a lot of the organizations were not ready to accept a volunteer. It was a matter of ...good reputation to have an American working for you and you have the name tag on the door and you say, you know "the American working in the municipality" but in fact that person sometimes didn't do anything but just sat at a desk. (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview, emphasis mine)

For the US staff, Goal 3 carried an altogether different type of benefit for the U.S. The volunteers' immersion in the local culture was not for the purpose of secret data collection but

because this process helped to turn them into critical global citizens (counter-neoliberal subjectivity):

*I think that it is important for America in such a vast continental base country as our own to understand that there is more to the world and different approaches and lifestyles than what we see here. **I think from a national point of view it makes Americans have a better sense of the advantages that they enjoy:** the lifestyles, the freedoms, the political and personal freedoms that they have.... **But it also opens up their eyes and makes them perhaps a bit more critical of some of the policies and politics that our country sometimes employs.*** (US APCD – Programming & Training, Interview, emphasis mine)

Aside from the specifics of the post-socialist context, some of the US staff pointed out that the importance of Goal 2 and 3 over Goal 1 was also a reflection of Peace Corps' internal priorities and dynamics such as the leadership styles of different Country Directors and the profile of the volunteers:

On Peace Corps Directors: *"I have to say I think different countries, different Peace Corps countries and **different Peace Corps directors probably focus on the development piece differently** and frankly I think that I was in and out of Peace Corps for a number of years but I think that not everybody regards Peace Corps as a development institution. They regard it as a nice thing that allows Americans to go abroad to learn a language, to get to learn a culture. They make some contribution but **the biggest contribution is sort of the social contribution where Bulgarians and you know in some small village and some small town can make a connection with an American**"* (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine);

On the volunteers' profile: *"I am less convinced that the technical impact is really where Peace Corps' mark is because for me personally and from what I have seen in the lives of volunteers and frankly in staff... and it may have been different in the 1960s, but what we offer Peace Corps countries is not necessarily technical assistance. [...] there are certainly technical development aspects that happen but 2 years is a very short time for real development change. So, on an individual level **I really think it is the interaction between the American and the counterpart and the community that changes both parties, [...] we are not bringing it highly trained engineers, or technicians.** We are bringing in recent college grads who have a huge sense of optimism about the world and their place in it and a willingness to roll up their sleeves and do whatever"* (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine).

In both of the above quotes, the Country Directors questioned the technical assistance/development impact of Peace Corps and highlighted the contributions of Peace Corps

that allowed the people of two different countries to interact, learn, and change each other (counter-neoliberal subjectivity). The younger profile of the volunteers was one reason why the technical assistance did not happen at the expert level but through the provision of another set of helping hands to “do whatever.” The fact that many of the volunteers were recent college graduates was also the main reason why one of the Country Directors concluded that “...*in Peace Corps I felt we were in the business of making grassroots development workers, right. And how do we do it as effectively as possible*” (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine). This is a significant departure from the logic of Goal 1 because it suggests that Peace Corps was providing “men and women in training” not “trained men and women.” The statement is similar to the notion of Peace Corps as a training ground from the public volunteer discourse but in this articulation it is closer to the notion of commodification (neoliberal governance) rather than a simple two-way technical learning (counter-neoliberal subjectivity).

Another US staff member explained that despite the dynamics on the ground, publicly Goal 1 continues to be articulated as a one-way transfer of skill because:

And it is hard for us an agency, Peace Corps official to talk, to not put Goal 1 first, because it is not a politically correct message. We want to keep saying that we bring skills to these countries, so we do. But again, we do on individual level but I think overall the profile of our volunteer has not changed that much over a 50 years of our history and in 1961 having a college educated math teacher, English teacher, or a farmer or other things, it had a much bigger impact than now having a college educated generalist going out to a place like Bulgaria that has master level teachers, students, engineers... we were... Our volunteers were 22 years old, they are walking into schools with master teachers who are linguists; some of the Bulgarians have been teaching English forever. Yes, it is a hard thing to say “Yes, I am providing you with a qualified English-skill teacher”. I am providing you with an enthusiastic English-Language speaker who can help your class move in ways that you couldn’t but I am not necessarily providing you with a master teacher because I am not. (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine)

The pressure to be politically correct then explains why the public discourse on the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria, especially in the Congressional Budget Justifications, focuses on volunteer activities that contribute to the achievement of Goal 1.

Mixed Views on the Goals of Transition

When asked specifically whether and how Peace Corps supported the post-socialist development (transformation) of Bulgaria, the program staff expressed a wide range of opinions. Those who were involved with the implementation of the Business programs (SBD/CED) were most likely to acknowledge that Peace Corps tried to actively support the goal of building a market economy even if it was not as successful as anticipated:

*These [the volunteers] are the bearers of skills that were completely new to the local people because generally companies in the local areas had no experience in marketing, negotiations, ... planning ... even planning, preparing their strategies to sell their products because everything by then was done by the huge foreign trade organizations.[...] Also simultaneously with the breakup of this foreign trade organizations system, the whole market where they conducted their trade collapsed and that was one of the key things that **volunteers kind of ...tried to fill the gap; filled it to a great degree.** If it were not for the suspicion that existed at that time, you know the “the big, rotting imperialism”, all those clichés, that communist propaganda had fed people for over 40- years they could have been more successful. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)*

The majority of the staff felt that Peace Corps supported the goals of the transition indirectly. The local Bulgarian staff especially felt that there was a fine line between supporting the transition and upholding the apolitical role of the volunteers:

***You cannot go around this issue, definitely.** If you are supporting communities, you are also supporting also communities that also have to be autonomous, have to have their own power of getting their goals and getting their development ... reflect the transition to market-economy and all that stuff, so of course it had something to do with that, definitely, **although no volunteers were prompted or they were actually ...discouraged to go into political, you know, or political discussion, etc., etc.** but I think that the overall strengthening of the ...soft skills of Bulgarian local authorities and the skills of NGOs did help ...for the transition. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)*

One of the Bulgarian program managers shared that in the mid 1990s the role of Peace Corps in the transition was not a topic that was openly discussed with potential partners:

*Honestly, it wasn't the time to have those discussions. **We didn't because accepting the volunteers was enough of a challenge.** There were many people who were former party secretaries ...this was the period of democracy but it wasn't smart to push them too much if they were to accept the Americans. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Instead of the higher goals of the transition, the conversations with partner agencies centered on pragmatic topics:

*The Ministry that we were most connected with was the Ministry of Education. I remember meeting with the Minister and it was about what's the role of an English teacher, how this fits within our national model, I think there was frankly some discussion about whether the volunteers were qualified if they have the right skills to be English teachers in their school **so it was a real...more pragmatic about the role of the English teacher as opposed to how do we fit within the whole transition that Bulgaria is undergoing.** (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Few members of the Bulgarian program staff disagreed with the very notion that Peace Corps played a role in the transition mostly because the volunteers worked on the individual/local rather than at the national/policy level:

*I don't think so. [...] of course it was considered a development organization, of course we worked with the local governments, with the municipalities, with the ministries at the ...governmental level, but **I don't think that Peace Corps had these ideas of transforming the society overall but more it was transforming people** as I said ...just giving them the human face of a foreigner. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)*

***I can't say the country.** But I could say that **there was impact on many communities** and yes, definitely many communities were impacted positively and But I think the success is on the local level. Those on national levels, such influences on market development, da-da-da, we didn't influence that but on community level definitely. Organizations, individuals, even the whole community definitely, they benefited and those who were more active, proactive, open, they benefited a lot. Even the work of one volunteer, sometimes gave such a push of a community or an organization that was long-term impact for many of them. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)*

One staff member pointed out that the size of the program was relatively small in order to have had an impact on the transition:

I don't think that the presence of one hundred Americans can change the transition of a whole country. Honestly. ...Honestly, I don't think that they have changed the transition. We are still in transition and it is not clear where we are heading....I don't know if you agree but for me the transition started in 1989 and have gone various ways, unplanned and uncontrolled by anyone. (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)

The perspectives of the staff aside, the opening the Peace Corps program in Bulgaria had a direct impact on the transition because it required the creation of certain market mechanisms. As the first international volunteer development organization with long-term assignments in the country, Peace Corps/Bulgaria became unintentionally a pioneer in private sector hiring among other things:

...whether it was legal to rent apartments or houses? There were no contracts that were really recognized by the government or the tax authorities or the banks... how you were going to pay people? In what currency? None of those things were really fixed or accepted or recognized. [...]There were no systems for a foreigner to open a bank account, transfer funds, so I often found myself sitting with treasury officials. Trying to figure out, **how we can bring in funds, tax free**, hire these people tax free and in fact pay our employees. One of the most difficult things for us in terms of shaping the economy was, we really were sort of the pioneers of private sector hiring. (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine)

If the majority of the staff felt that Peace Corps/Bulgaria supported the goals of the transition indirectly, if at all, what explains their prominent feature in the public discourse about the role of Peace Corps in the country? The answer again lies, on the one hand, in the necessity to speak the language of the donor (Congress) in order to receive funding. On the other hand, the program staff and the volunteers focused on executing their tasks, rather than the larger objectives and goals that their tasks were contributing to:

*I remember that in the strategy it was included that we are orienting towards a democratic society and a market economy and that in order to support these strategic goals the program will furnish these volunteers for this, this and this. **In order for this***

*strategy to be approved by congress perhaps there are such moments. Did this happen in reality? [...]I think that it would be very ambitious to say that the volunteers worked towards something like this. They came at the task level. When you formulate goals, objectives, milestones, tasks.... **I knew what the goals were and they knew them but they didn't ponder too much on them.** (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)*

The disassociation of Peace Corps from the goals of transition was an important reason why the program staff could see the benefit of the continued presence of Peace Corps after the country had accomplished those goals, after it was recognized as a country with a functioning market economy in 2002, and after it became an EU member country in 2007.

Bring Back a Reformed Peace Corps

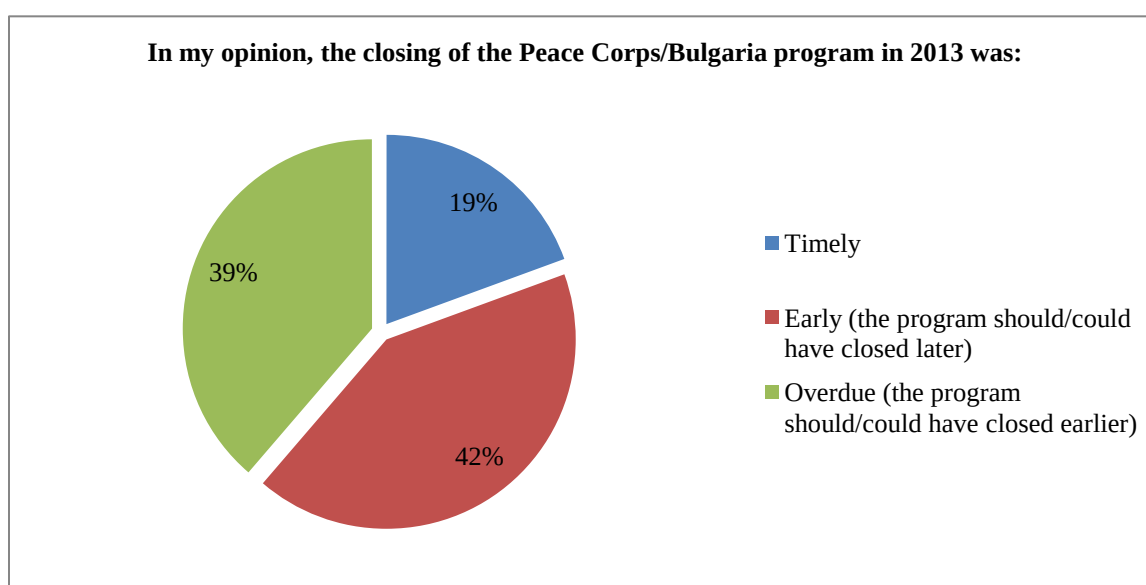
The majority of the staff (close to 60%) believed the Peace Corps' closure in 2013 was either early or timely (see Figure 37). The remaining 40% were mostly staff members who had left Peace Corps prior to the country's accession to the EU and were genuinely surprised to learn that the program had closed in 2013, meaning that they expected it to have closed earlier, not that they were against its continued presence.

Those who believed that the program's closure was timely mostly expressed an understanding why after so many years and given Bulgaria's entry in the EU Peace Corps would decide to finally close the program even if it can still make contributions:.

*I expected the program to stay for another 10 years at the time I worked there. ...I think that for Bulgarians it is finally time to take things in their own hands. Let's put it this way. It's time. **I am sure that there were good reasons to stay for such a long time and probably we need additional support but probably politically this is not feasible because the country is part of the EU** and basically from the EU we can benefit from many programs for development. Things in Bulgaria are now shaky but probably it was time given the political reasons. **I think that there is also room for improvement and further development in Bulgaria but...it's time.** We cannot be held by hand forever. We just need to be self-sufficient it is high time. (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Those who thought that the program closed earlier felt that the program could have stayed longer but that it had to be reformed. The common opinion was that the project sectors that continued to be relevant were the TEFL and YD projects (the social work aspect of the project, especially working with children and adults with disabilities) but not the COD project. In terms of site placements, the staff felt that “...*the small villages, the Roma minorities, the marginal groups of people still need volunteers*” (BG Program & Training Assistant, Interview). Also, both the smaller and larger communities could have used more Response volunteers.

Figure 37: Staff Perceptions on Peace Corps/Bulgaria’s Closure, n=31

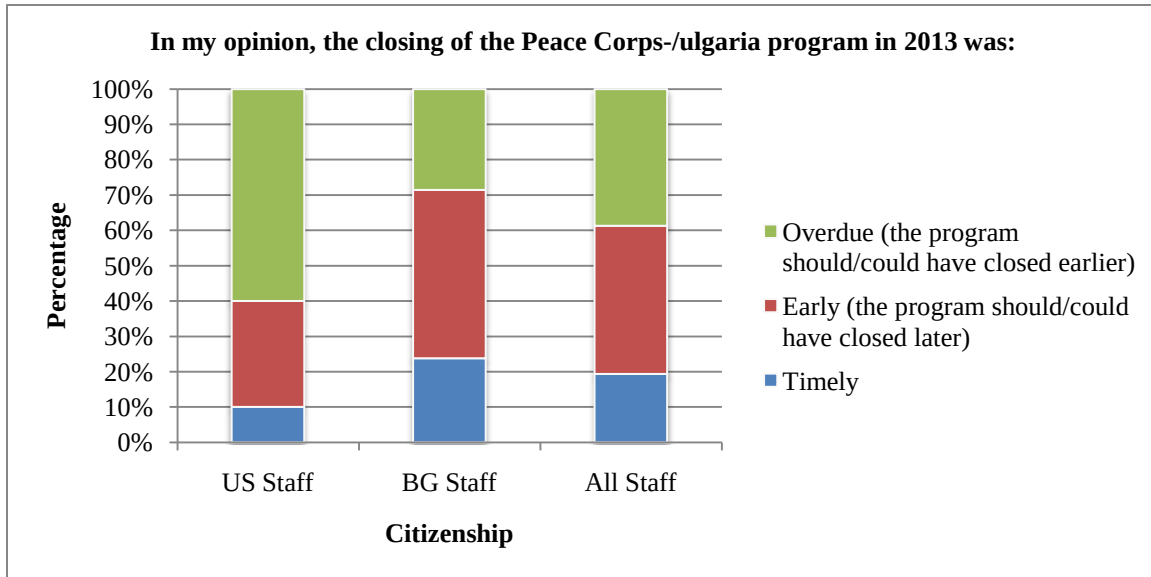


Between the US and the Bulgarian program staff more of the US staff expected that the program could have closed earlier (see Figure 38). Furthermore, US staff also expressed the opinion that programs like the Peace Corps, which focus on community empowerment, can add value anywhere, including in the U.S.:

Well, I didn’t anticipate that it would stay that long actually. But you know, again, Peace Corps programs can add value in any country, right? Because it is about

community development and there are similar programs, you know, in Vermont that are promoting community engagement and are addressing their own community challenges and issues. So I think it adds value anywhere. (US Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)

Figure 38: Staff Perceptions on Peace Corps/Bulgaria's Closure by Citizenship (n=31)



THE VOLUNTEERS

Cross-Cultural Exchange over Development

Like the program staff, volunteers associated the purpose of Peace Corps in Bulgaria with the Core Peace Corps Goals:

*...the message from Peace Corps ... was very clear about the three goals. **The three goals were drilled into us very well.** I am not sure if I can still recite them word for word but conceptually it is about providing requested technical assistance, **it is about being a representative of the United States in terms of culture and good will** and all of that...connecting peoples and then the third goal is coming back to the US and sharing with the Americans the experience of being abroad. So those were very clear.... It was very consistent. **But** ... (B1 TEFL Volunteer, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Like the volunteer above many other volunteers embedded a public-diplomacy role within the Core Peace Corps Goals, which is reflective of the Peace Corps rhetoric to the New Volunteers (from the Welcome Books). The B1 TEFL volunteer continued his reflection with

some statements that underscore how the changing nature of Peace Corps and the specific positionality of an actor affect their perspective of the role of Peace Corps.

[Cont'd from above] ***But Peace Corps didn't talk to us much about the Peace Corps as a development agency. It is more about diplomacy and people-to-people, and that may be changing now, but in my time we were very separate from any kind of foreign aid for the most part, until they started introducing the small grants....Yes, there was community development as an aspect of what we were doing but the kind of projects that we were encouraged to be involved with, I can say now they were a kind of development. But we were not trained to think of ourselves as development workers. We were people-to-people, working in small communities, you know, trying to develop bridges.*** (B1 TEFL Volunteer, Interview, emphasis mine)

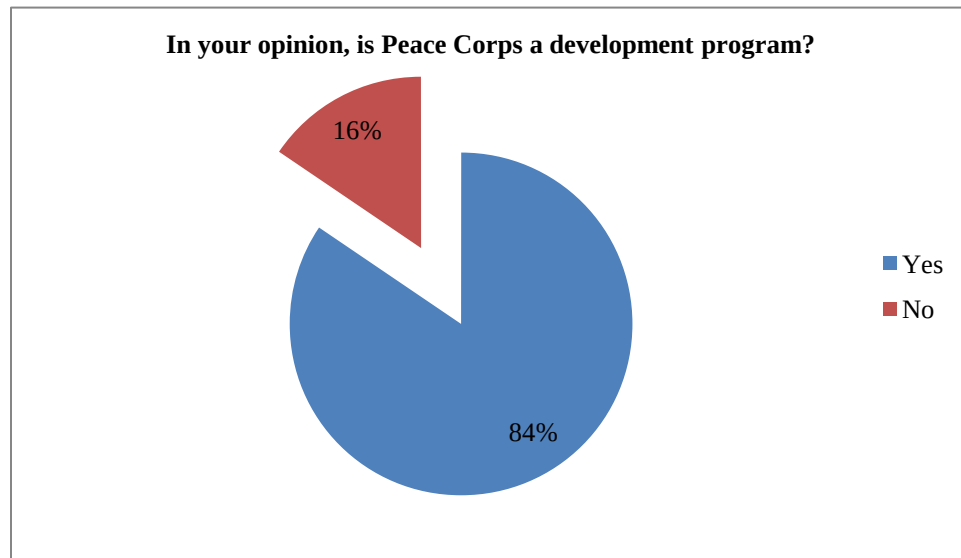
The notion that Peace Corps did not train the volunteers to think of themselves as development workers is reflective of the time of service of the volunteer because Peace Corps/Bulgaria started to refer to the volunteers as community development workers after this volunteer had completed his service. Another reason for the lack of awareness of Peace Corps as a development agency was related to the sector project of the volunteer. In the TEFL project, any type of community development work was part of the secondary rather than the primary volunteer assignment to teach English. In turn, TEFL volunteers received less community development training compared to volunteers from the other sector projects:

I would say that as a TEFL I was not very conscious of the community development aspect. There was a little bit in training but the reality is that in TEFL training it is so different: there is practice teaching, it is very stressful and you kind of lose your focus. So, when I became a technical trainer that was a big difference for me when I did the TEFL program and the YD program. I felt that the YD volunteers were much more focused on community development, grassroots development, and sustainable development. I thought that they had better expectations, that they were more in touch with the Peace Corps mission, I think. And I think that this has a lot to do with the design of the training. (B17 TEFL Volunteer, Interview, emphasis mine)

When asked directly – “Is Peace Corps a development program?” – 84% of the volunteers agreed that it was, while 16% disagreed (see Figure 39). The volunteers who chose

the “No” option included nine volunteers from the TEFL, ENV and YD programs, who served in Bulgaria after 2002.

Figure 39: Volunteer Perceptions on Peace Corps and Development, n=58



From their comments, however, it is clear that they don't view Peace Corps as void of development work, only that the development goal of the organization in Bulgaria was secondary to the cultural exchange goals (Goal 2 and 3):

*Although Peace Corps on the whole has elements of development involved, certainly in its guiding principles, **I would describe the purpose of the peace corps as first and foremost an organization focused on cultural exchange and building good will between the United States and lesser understood countries of the world.*** (B20 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)

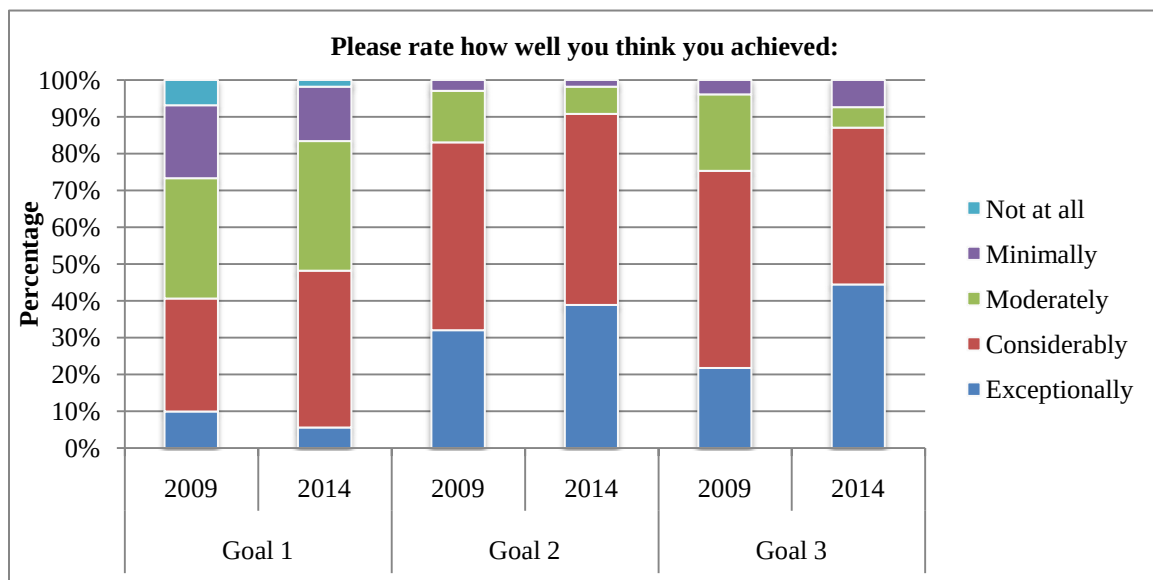
*I believe it is a developmental organization in some countries, and it was in the past. However, **in Bulgaria in 2010 it seemed more like a cultural exchange program** with the purpose of promoting goodwill and understanding between countries. The developmental aspect was secondary, and the country was not dependent on the Peace Corps for development.* (B26 YD Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)

One volunteer opined that the emphasis on Goal 2 and Goal 3 reflected the direction of the program staff:

...in Bulgaria there was always disregard, you know, about the first goal and “think of the peace and friendship”, “think of the cultural exchange”. “It is about the cultural exchange” And for me it was like: “Do they have to be mutually exclusive? Can we not have all three at one time?” But because I felt like ... they struggled with proving one, there was this huge focus on two and three. (B25 COD Volunteer, Interview, emphasis mine)

The view of the cross-cultural goals as a priority over the development goal was also reflective of the ability of the volunteers to deliver on those Goals. In my research close to 90% of the volunteer participants assessed that they had achieved both Goal 2 and Goal 3 exceptionally and considerably, whereas only half of the volunteers believed that that was the case for Goal 1 (see Figure 40). These distributions were higher but in the same direction as the data on the same question from the *2009 Annual Volunteer Survey: Bulgaria*.

Figure 40: Volunteer Self-Assessment on Their Impact in Select Years



Sources: Peace Corps 2009 Annual Volunteer Survey: Bulgaria (n=102); 2014 Follow-up Volunteer Survey (n=54).

Indirect Support for the Goals of Transition

The large majority of volunteers agreed that Peace Corps was supportive of the dual goals of transition and only a few volunteers were unsure or felt that Peace Corps did not support these processes. Among those who believed that Peace Corps was supportive, there was a considerable range in the extent to which they thought that that was the case. From “Yes, absolutely!”, “Very much so”, “I would like to think so”, to “in some ways”, “In a limited way”, “minimally” and “slightly”. In their answers volunteers often translated how the three Core Peace Corps Goals connect to the goals of transition:

Peace Corps/Bulgaria helped host nationals obtain soft skills related to democracy, and capitalism that contributed to building a market economy [Goal 1]. Through daily interaction, host nationals obtained an understanding of "more Western" practices [Goal 2 understood as Westernization]. I believe PCVs also learned the positive and negative aspects of the socialist period and the struggles of transition [Goal 3]. (B8 ENV Volunteer, Follow-up Survey)

In addition, some volunteers felt that Peace Corps was more supportive of the goal of democracy (four PCVs) or of the goal of market economy (four PCVs), rather than both goals. One volunteer commented specifically on the goal of EU accession, which replaced the dual goals of transition:

*Absolutely yes! **I take great pride in the fact that Peace Corps helped Bulgaria achieve its goal of joining the EU.** By teaching English, PCVs were helping to prepare students for work in Western Europe. Through working on Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World), we encouraged young women to become active participants in civil society. (B12 CED Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)*

In the “Not sure” group were volunteers who separated the direct from indirect support:

*I think it had the effect and perhaps that was part of the plan, but this was not discussed with me explicitly as a volunteer. Most importantly, **PCV carry democracy and market economy principles in their DNA, and whether they realize or not they are demonstrating the principles at their sites.** (B1 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)*

I think it was a good opportunity to provide exposure to people who had grown up in, and

*been educated in democracy and market economy and to share some of those norms and ideals. **Probably more useful in an experience exchange than for actual implementation of those ideas.*** (B14 YD Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)

The three “Not sure” comments highlight different aspects of the development process. The first two comments concern the question of “agency awareness.” Do volunteers realize the impact that they are having on the people/organizations/communities with which they interact? Can they make connections between their local work and larger societal processes? The third comment concerns the difference between doing and knowing: are volunteers successful in putting ideas into practice and not simply improving understanding about certain ideas?

In the group of volunteers who disagreed were volunteers who did not remember being told to assist with the transition as well as few volunteers who expressed a concern that a mandate to support the dual goals of transition would have contradicted the policy that the volunteers should maintain an apolitical role:

*I believe Peace Corps and the American government (as well as PCVs) do support and promote **democracy and a free-market economy**, but I do not believe the purpose of Peace Corps in Bulgaria is linked to this. Additionally, Peace Corps strongly discourages/prohibits volunteers engaging in politics - so a PCV plays a minimal role in the process.* (B26 YD Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)

The clarification that Bulgaria’s transition goal of building a market economy involved the building of a “free” market economy represents a case of the internalization of the language of neoliberal ideology. Very few volunteers (six volunteers) used this language.

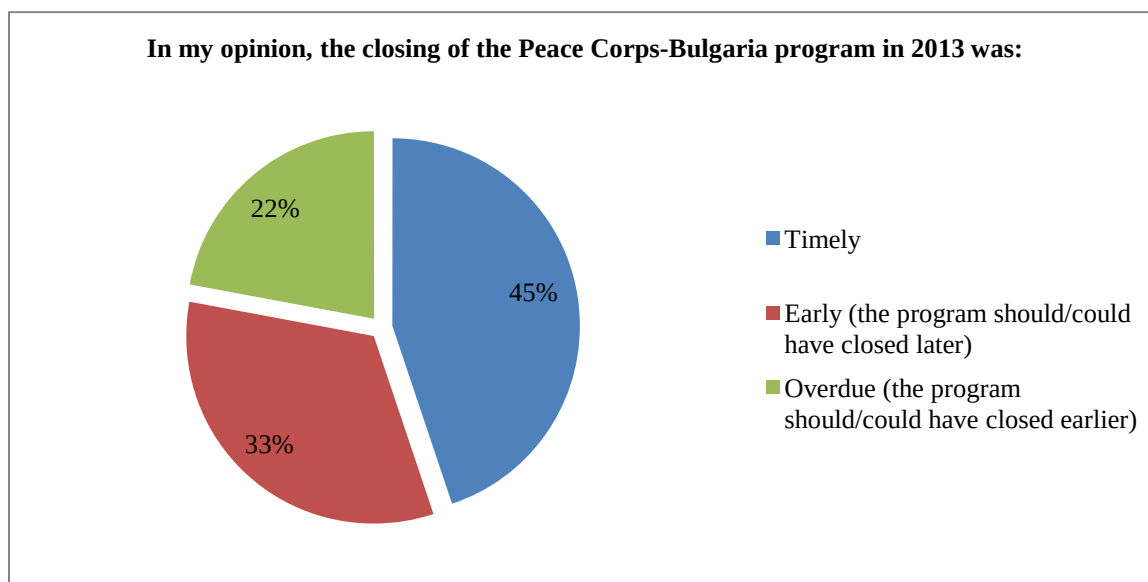
Mixed Views on the Timing of Peace Corps Closure

The volunteers split on whether or not the timing of Peace Corps’ closure in 2013 was timely and in their comments some noted that they felt conflicted about their answer (see Figure 41). The largest number of comments is from volunteers who felt that they couldn’t decide

because of a lack of information about the Peace Corps’ activities in Bulgaria in 2013. There was only one volunteer who expressed the opinion that Peace Corps’ closure in 2013 was overdue: “Far overdue. Government's inability to act on this was shameful” (B6 TEFL Volunteer, Subscribe Survey). Those who expressed the opinion that the program closed earlier or that the closure was timely provided comments similar to the program staff who thought that the program could have reformed and stayed longer by focusing on placements in rural Bulgaria and on youth and minority awareness, as well as teaching English:

For me I ended in 2006 and Bulgaria entered the EU in 2007 so I sort of saw a ticking clock because I noticed a lot of other countries that once they joined the EU they started phasing out. So, I knew it was a matter of time. I thought that there will be a certain time when they will be phasing out Peace Corps. But I saw a need in my community. Absolutely. Especially for English teachers because I was secondary English teacher but I ended up teaching pretty much all the grades because there were no English teachers. (B15 TEFL Volunteer, Volunteer Focus Group)

Figure 41: Volunteer Perceptions on Peace Corp/Bulgaria’s Closure, n=136



In the follow-up volunteer survey those who were conflicted chose the “other” option, yet they expressed similar views to the volunteers who argued for keeping a reformed program.

During my interviews, a volunteer expanded on the dilemma to answer this question by bringing in the issue of subjective versus objective reasoning:

*... most Bulgarians were really sad when Peace Corps closed. They had excellent contact with Peace Corps. **It was a pretty loved and respected program so it was kind of the end of an era and people were sad and there are certainly places in Bulgaria that could continue to benefit from volunteers:** villages and very small rural areas where volunteers could bring life into the school or to help with different initiatives so a lot of schools in those smaller areas were really disappointed. **On the other hand,... Bulgaria is not the same country that was in 1990s.** We are not even in the early 2000s. it is just radically different...I kind of feel that it was one of the only things when I first came but now there are a variety of options especially for schools and municipalities.[...]if you **did a cost-benefit analysis I would probably agree that it was timely** because it was no longer as important because there were other options [the EU Erasmus Program, the Fulbright program]. **But looking at it from a more sentimental point of view it was just the quality of the program itself that was kind of sad** because PCVs brought a lot to their communities that they served and those communities to see them go. (B9 TEFL Volunteer, Interview, emphasis mine)*

The notion that Peace Corp was a “loved” and “quality” but not “as important” program given that there are other presumably less costly programs exemplifies the expansion of development based on market-driven rationality (neoliberal subjectivity). It also demonstrates the power of cost-benefit analysis (neoliberal governance) to trump over feelings.

THE LOCAL PARTNERS

Mutual Development through Cross-Cultural Exchange

The local partners shared and departed from some of the context specific interpretations of the Core Peace Corps Goals by the local staff and the volunteers. Like the other actors, the partners also referred to the importance of all Core Peace Corps Goals and more of them felt that the cross-cultural impact was stronger.

I was left with the impression that he was here to learn more about our culture, how we live, what is our level....I think that this is not a bad thing to see how people in Europe live. I have very good impressions. He wasn't confrontational. He was a very good boy, he was shy as X said about theirs, but at that point we had more young colleagues and

they befriended him and took him to discos at night, to kill a pig... (Cultural Center Partner, Elhovo Focus Group, emphasis mine)

Some of the local partners also confirmed the concerns of the local Bulgarian staff that Goal 3 was perceived as a cover for espionage by the local people. In my Garmen group the participants allowed a fellow village man to join our conversation and the following exchange about the closure of the program occurred:

School Partner: *People were very surprised when they said that they are closing “Why! Did we do something wrong? Is it our fault?” It was a big surprise?*

Interviewer: *If it was up to you?*

School Partner: *If it was up to us like the joke “get them back these” we want them back.*

Municipality Partner: *I wanted more.*

School Partner: *they helped. They offered a very different outlook on life, on communication, on practice...*

Municipality Partner: *it is so strange that an outsider have to come ...*

Village Man: ***They have already collected the intelligence and there is no longer a point in their staying***

School Partner: [name of village man] *was always telling [name of the volunteer] that she was working for CIA and asked if she had written her report and she answered “Yes, [name of village man] drinks rakia [local moonshine]”. It was very funny. They had a sense of humor.* (Excerpt from the Garmen Focus Group Transcript, emphasis mine)

This exchange shows that while the local partners were aware of the perception of volunteers as CIA agents, they did not believe it. Other local partners expressed an opinion that while acknowledging the possibility that some volunteers were CIA agents, was closer to the interpretations of the U.S. program staff of Goal 3 as a means to create Americans who are critical global citizens:

*We understood it [the purpose] in multiple layers. At the level of direct interaction/work with the volunteers: **the volunteer by working here, by living here, by knowing people he is an informant for what? he increases the knowledge of the US about the world.** Americans are very closed people; most of them haven’t been across the ocean. I am right? They don’t know even their government in their state, sometimes. So having people from all over the world from Africa, Asia, and everywhere else, this is for me...information is of most value. Also, most of them are well-intentioned people. When they come, they orient quickly. They are not people who can extract information to use against the host country. **I suspect there were some volunteers with other functions***

but...at this level and mostly it is for American to obtain information, realistic information, because there are many myths there, stereotypes about the rest of the world...[SD: the cultural exchange] not only. Although, America is a mix of people from everywhere, there is no race, country or ethnicity that is not present in America -when you go there, this is what I have read but you can tell if it is correct - **the second and third generation don't know anything about the rest of the world.** This is a big idea of John Fitzgerald Kennedy. (Nature Park Partner, Malko Tarnovo Focus Group, emphasis mine)

The language of the above quote also conveys a sense of cultural superiority on the part of the local partner compared to the “well-intentioned” but “ignorant of the world” American volunteers. This is very much reminiscent of the narrative of the novel *The Ugly American* (1958), which was one of the justifications for the opening the Peace Corps in 1963.

Another local partner expressed a unique interpretation of Goal 1 where the interaction with Peace Corps Volunteers helped to change both the attitudes of the local people - “the way that Bulgarians think” – as well as their understanding about themselves:

...but let's not forget that before Bulgaria was not under an Iron but a Steel curtain. People had iron blinds over their eyes and couldn't see beyond their noses. After this curtain fell, after foreigners came not only to work here but to work to change people, they have impacted one way or another the way that Bulgarians think, regardless of whether we admit it or not. The Bulgarians like to stay in their nest and say “we, the Bulgarians”, “we are” so and so and to cling to some myths but those myths are falling apart. People can know themselves when they have something to compare themselves to because before that the Bulgarian had nothing to compare to. (NGO Local Partner, Spelling Bee Focus Group, emphasis mine)

In the above sense Peace Corps has a latent Reverse Goal 2* - To help promote a better understanding of other peoples of themselves – that is very similar to the Reverse Goal 2* for the volunteers identified in the volunteer public discourse.

Mixed Views on the Goals of Transition

The opinion of the local partners on whether Peace Corps has contributed to the dual goals of transition ranged from “they contributed greatly” to “I think that the total effect is

minimal for the changes” to “I don’t think that the volunteers have contributed with anything.”

Among those who agreed that Peace Corps/Bulgaria had a role in those processes there was a general agreement that the volunteers contributed directly or indirectly to the goal of democracy rather than market economy.

- **Directly:** *“First of all to understand that transforming local community or solving problems through local actions or through the community action, which is part of the democracy principle, to be engaged and to be involved and to be a volunteer, yes.... **for democracy, like in principle and practice**”* (NGO Partner in Gabrovo, Interview, emphasis mine);
- **Indirectly:** *“...for democracy indirectly. Some Americans arrive that you can judge as products of American democracy, from this point of view, if by meeting this American you can judge their general culture...**This is useful: to see in reality what Americans are like, what is the product of American society as human material, and that they are to a great extent normal, well-intentioned people**”* (Nature Park Partner, Malko Tarnovo Focus Group, emphasis mine).

Among those who disagreed there was greater variety of reasons: some thought that this depended on the volunteer, others that the volunteers did more for cross-cultural exchange, or that their assistance was limited to the local level:

*...essentially that’s how I understood it: bringing resources available to the town that were not available before so that the town can develop. **I even didn’t see it as a transition. I see it as becoming better in the town.** And the first volunteer is not necessarily clear on what to do but as we became more specific, then the municipalities became more specific of what type of person, what type of skill-set say they wanted.* (Peace Corps/Bulgaria Business Center/Municipality Partner in Vidin, Interview, emphasis mine)

Another partner noted that the answer depended on whether the work of volunteers in single organizations or of all of the volunteers in the country was considered:

Overall, I think that there is a national effect but...it is multiplied effect.** It is based on what happened in different municipalities, NGOs because there were volunteers working with NGOs, not only with municipalities and all of this has reached some cumulative effect that has impacted the stabilization of those NGOs, **the improvement of the capacity of the experts working in municipalities and I definitely think that this is one of the results. (Municipality Partner in Gabrovo, Interview, emphasis mine)

In many of the comments “time” was an important factor in how the role of Peace Corps in the transition was judged. The general agreement was that early volunteers had a greater role (impact) on the transition because there was a larger need for the type of development assistance that the volunteers offered:

***It may be a small program but it was very timely and when the help is timely then its value is much larger.** That is why the fact that it is a smaller program financially doesn't mean that its value is lower. Everything was...**people didn't think about those things then.**...there was no concept or information...Now, the world is different with the Internet. Bulgarians, young people especially and even older people, now know English. (NGO Partner in Sredets and Burgas, Interview, emphasis mine)*

*I think that **Peace Corps opened in a very strategically important moment** for our country and perhaps withdrew at the moment when ...those processes that were a priority in the Peace Corps goals, they saw a sustaining and sustainable result. (Municipality Partner in Gabrovo, Interview, emphasis mine)*

*My view is that they [the volunteers] were here at the very end. The transition was ...I don't know if it will ever end but...we have made that step towards the transition and for me during the last years **I don't think that the volunteers have contributed with anything. This is for the last group.** My impression is that towards the end, they were not working as hard as earlier groups. (NGO Partner, Elhovo Focus Group, emphasis mine)*

One reason why the local partners were more willing to acknowledge indirect rather than direct role in the post-socialist transformation may be because they, like the program staff, also had to confront various “misunderstandings” about the purpose of Peace Corps, including that the volunteers were tourists, evangelists, secret agents, as well as the notion that working with volunteers promoted U.S. imperialism and Americanization. Here is an exchange from the focus group at the Spelling Bee Camp:

*School Partner in Haskovo: Many of the older people, neighbor in the block and my grandma in the village didn't know about Peace Corps and thought **“Americans! Wondered what to do and decided to tour the world.”** But slowly they saw that it wasn't just that and that they really helped.*

*NGO Partner in Blagoevgrad: Some people believed that, looking from the sidelines that this is an attempt - from a political point of view – **for American to step in Bulgaria to put a hand** – we have commented that. That this is a way to place their volunteers.*

School partner in Haskovo: **Agents!**

NGO Partner in Blagoevgrad: *Not exactly, **just people who slowly can assimilate us.** And I have replied that it is better that Americans assimilate us rather than the Russians as a joke because I am Russophile.* (Excerpt from Spelling Bee Focus Group Transcript, emphasis mine)

The symbolic meaning of Peace Corps as a demonstration of Bulgaria's acceptance of the new geopolitical orientation towards the West was certainly an aspect of Peace Corps that many of the local partners were cognizant of:

*...he [the mayor] **wanted a PCV because** we were such a close system that he just wanted to show an American, a foreign presence in town. Here is a person from the USA that you can go see and talk about specific issues. **For him it was the way he showed that as much as it was about a change of mind, to show openness,** as it was "there was no specific you need to do this and this", you have these specific tasks and we need someone to help us do it. **It was more so let's change the model, let's go away from the old system** and as we were doing things, carrying on, getting more involved, some things worked very well, some things we couldn't do....* (Peace Corps Business Center/Municipality Partner in Vidin, Interview, emphasis mine)

One of the local partners explained how the symbolic power of Peace Corps as an U.S. agency was instrumentalized to raise the profile of the host organization and to fight law breaking:

Nature Park Partner A: *The visit by the U.S. Ambassador! She didn't go the municipality but to us! So during all those years **our authority grew.**[...] yes but still, the authority of the US, because after all this is a government agency, behind this organization is the US with all of its power, the American government. This raises the profile of the organization. **When I was after the mayor of M.Tarnovo for pouching, I don't remember who I took...it wasn't [name of volunteer]....but I thought to myself if those "nutri"[gangsters] attempt to beat me there is a volunteer with me.** [Name of colleague] was with me and maybe it was [name of PCV] and I thought that this is a big thing. A huge jeep came as big as a tank and the mayor stepped from it with his loaded gun and I stood at the entrance....**this gave me a big authority and security because you know that the American government always protects its citizens. They are not like ours.....the power and principle of the U.S....***

Nature Park Partner B: *that there is an outside person....*

Nature Park Partner C: *how is this relevant?*

Nature Park Partner A: *as a director of the organization I valued this. There are many other organizations some with bigger or smaller recognition but **this kind of***

authority mattered to me. (Excerpt from the Malko Tarnovo Focus Group Transcript, emphasis mine)

The use of volunteers to combat law breaking means that Peace Corps had an unintended impact in the areas that the EU identified as “in need of progress.” Post EU membership the European Commission continued to monitor Bulgaria’s progress in the areas of judicial reform, corruption and organized crime.

Others saw the symbolic power of Peace Corps in improving the negative image of the NGO sector through the power of positive associations with the volunteers working for NGOs:

NGOs in the beginning of 1991 was a dirty word and I think more or less through the Peace Corps even that was cleared: that the voluntary based organizations in principle and experiences in general with volunteers is something very, very good, from my general point of view because it was a very big misunderstanding what is to be a volunteer because of the previous country experience. (NGO Partner in Gabrovo, Interview, emphasis mine)

From this quote it appears that the issue with organized volunteerism is twofold: first that the newly created NGO sector in Bulgaria had a bad reputation and second that the legacies of organized volunteering from the state socialist period were negative.

Bring Back the Peace Corps

The majority of the local partners felt that the program closed too early and agreed that there was still a purpose for Peace Corps in smaller rural communities, in the border regions and in minority communities “[b]ecause ***those communities need a change of mentality, so that they can understand the principles of voluntarism, to learn some English... this is all needed***” (NGO Partner in Sredets and Burgas, Interview, emphasis mine). Indeed the representatives of minority communities – a Roma NGO Partner and the Municipality partners from a rural community with mixed ethnic groups - wanted Peace Corps to come back. Even a local partner

from a border community who was not happy with the volunteer she worked with shared that “*I wanted to take another volunteer because **even if I wasn’t pleased** I knew that it was very beneficial for the community*” (Cultural Center Partner, Malko Tarnovo Focus Group, emphasis mine).

Only the members of the Elhovo Group pointed out that while they can always use volunteers “*At this stage **such volunteers don’t look good***” (Business Center Partner, Elhovo Focus Group, emphasis mine). Especially “*...**if the approach is that we are a Third World country, I don’t think that we are**, so...we are not a Third World country*” (NGO Partner, Elhovo Focus Group, emphasis mine). Related to this is that local partners took offense in Peace Corps’ policies that they perceived as grounded in associations of Bulgaria as a Third World country:

Nature Park Partner A: Yes, but ***something that was offensive was that Bulgaria is not an African country*** and they came with a huge water purifying equipment, they were so stressed out.

Nature Park Partner B: *Their own medications...*

Interviewer: *Many of those regulations are standard practice.*

Nature Park Partner A: *I know that it is for their safety but after all this is Bulgaria!*

Nature Park Partner B: *But at the end they didn’t use those!* (Excerpt from the Malko Tarnovo Focus Group Transcript, emphasis mine)

In contrast, one of the NGO local partners felt that Peace Corps was still needed precisely because in Bulgaria there were parts – Roma communities - that were worse than in a Third World country, as well as because a “First World” categorization of Bulgaria had translated into a decrease of foreign assistance for their NGO:

Everyone treats us like an EU country but I will give you an example. The first visit of our volunteer was to a Roma village where we work and she said that she had been in Africa before she came here but even there, there was nothing like this. There are some other organizations that we work with who sent humanitarian assistance to Bulgaria for many years now. Last year, because these are donor center that collect gifts for children, last year we went for a meeting where they said “your country is now an EU members for a few years, and we believe that you are a rich country and you should star collect and

*send to the poorer countries. They wanted to stop their activity in the country but after a visit to the Burgas region they continued for an unlimited time. **The fact that we are EU members made us a country that can be treated as a first hand country.... I think that the EU entry is only on paper. This is how it feels.*** (NGO Partner, Burgas Focus Group, emphasis mine)

The seemingly conflicting assessments of Bulgaria as a Third World country or not are indicative of the power dynamics that underline international development work between the foreigners and the local people and between the majority and minority groups in the country. A Third World association was perceived as offensive by the local partners, who were part of the Bulgarian ethnic majority group, but it was welcomed when it was assigned to a Bulgarian minority group (a Roma community).

Another contradiction in local partner perspectives concerns the continued relevance of Peace Corps' Goal 2: improve the understanding about Americans. Some partners noted that the country has changed where now there are multiple avenues for contact with Americans including through the migration of Bulgarians to the U.S.: *"They have their specific American nuances, to say, some imprint, but **this was useful to Bulgaria during the first years and probably later...now, everyone has relatives in the U.S.**"* (Nature Park Partner, Malko Tarnovo Focus Group, emphasis mine).

Other local partners believed that the interaction with Peace Corps Volunteers shouldn't be compared to other forms of contacts with foreigners because the nature of those interactions doesn't involve living and working with the foreigners like Peace Corps did:

Municipality Partner A: *For me, personally, it wasn't a first contact. Other foreigners have come because of the folklore, for research...but they...**we accepted them [the volunteers] in our community, in our families!***

School Partner: ***This is completely different.***

Municipality Partner A: *This is very different.*

School Partner: *There have been Danes coming here for 10 years but they come and go in groups for a few nights but this is very different.*

Municipality Partner A: *They lived here with us. They came at home during the weekend.*

School Partner: *You just can't compare those.*

Municipality Partner A: *There is no comparison!*

Municipality Partner B: ***We lived together!*** (Excerpt from the Garmen Focus Group Transcript, emphasis mine)

The Garmen group also offered a human perspective on the question of Peace Corps closure in 2013, which highlights the interaction between needing and wanting certain types of development assistance:

*I think about it from a personal perspective. They did their work. They all implemented an important project for the community so this is all good but ...**from a human perspective it will be nice if the program had continued personally.** I didn't think about what projects the new volunteers can work on, I was thinking more about that **this will make me feel good to have a new volunteer.** Perhaps that is why we think so...*
(Municipality Partner, Garmen Focus Group, emphasis mine)

The positive memories of the volunteers – “make me feel good,” “the great positivism,” “the energy,” “the humility,” “they also have fun,” “their lack of pretense” – explains the continued support for the program and the type of change in attitudes that was desired by the local partners:.

School Partner in Pavlikeni: *I wanted to speak about **the great positive attitude** that these people bring*

School Partner in Haskovo: *And **the energy.***

School Partner in Pavlikeni: *And the energy. What makes the most impression: they are literate, college graduates but **nobody is boasting**, nobody is trying to [pause] they show you but **they also have fun**, which is something that for us as a school community we are more rigid, more schematic, the class-lesson system, but it is different when [name of volunteer] enters and says “Hi guys” ☺. Just what I learned is that. If they had impacted us, we have transferred it to our children, and if one of them would pass it on their friends and along the chain of communication what we are missing. We are somewhat more, not to generalize, more traditional at least the teachers in the small city where I am. **What I liked is this positive mood, this ability to make a show, to present things in an accessible way**, like at the National Competition in Sofia. The vice-ambassador took off his jacket.*

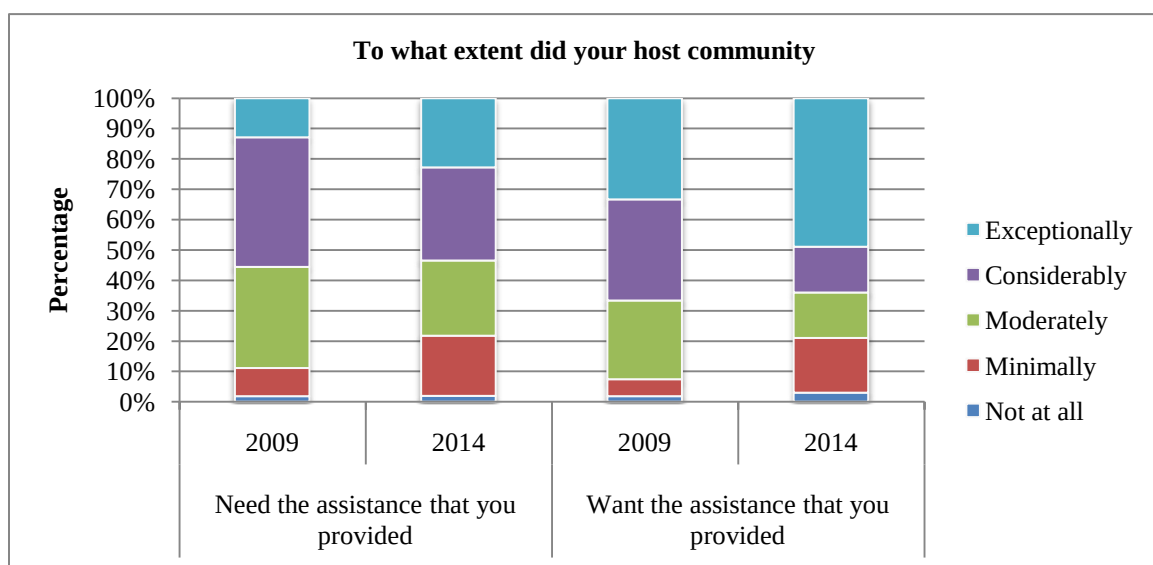
School Partner in Kostinbrod: *Exactly, it was amazing.*

School Partner in Pavlikeni: *And he did **an energizer.** This impressed me so much and I have shared it in school so that some people can remember that they should land themselves a bit. What I think is something that Peace Corps and the Volunteers contributed is this. **They contributed for democracy, for values, for***

communication, and this in some way will impact even the economic relationships, I think. (Excerpt from the Spelling Bee Focus Group Transcript, emphasis mine)

Data from the 2009 *Annual Volunteer Survey: Bulgaria* and from this research confirms that the volunteers also felt that they were wanted by the local organizations more than they were needed (see Figure 42). A mainstream development model around growth would read this data as a good justification to end or shrink a development assistance program, using Naderveen Pieterse’s models (2010). A development model around social transformation, however, would see in this data the evidence that the development interaction is based on cooperation and partnership, which is where development begins, not ends. If there is interest in participation, there are opportunities for mutual empowerment which is what alternative development wants to be. In the latter sense it is not surprising then that when Peace Corps withdrew “...*there were places where the people felt sort of abandoned...allured and abandoned [prilaskani i izostaveni]*” (NGO Partner in Veliko Tarnovo, Interview).

Figure 42: Volunteer Perceptions on Their Assistance in Select Years



Sources: Peace Corps 2009 Annual Volunteer Survey: Bulgaria (n=61); 2014 Follow-up Survey (n=54).

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the actor perspectives revealed significant differences within the actor groups as well as between actor groups. The views of the program staff (both US and BG staff) were closer to the views of the volunteers. The views of the BG staff were closer to the views of the local partners.

All actors referred to the Core Peace Corps Goals in their reflections about the purpose of Peace Corps in Bulgaria with the program staff and the volunteers commenting specifically on all three goals, while the local staff reiterating mostly the cross-cultural goals. Staff members differed in their views about the relationship between the three goals, including two US staff members who felt that Peace Corps should not have come to Bulgaria to begin with. In their views Bulgaria was not a Third World country and Peace Corps was not equipped to assist with the challenge of the post-socialist transitions. In contrast, the Bulgarian staff argued that while Bulgaria was not a Third World country, Peace Corps was equipped to assist the country meet its need for re-development, reorganization and rethinking rather than development in the traditional sense. Still, they were convinced that Peace Corps could help with the goals of transition indirectly by changing the attitudes and values of the people. In this sense, the program staff saw the role of Peace Corps in helping to create the new subjectivities for the new post-socialist social reality. Part of that process included better understanding and adoption of positive American values and attitudes (an enhanced understanding of Goal 2) and confronting misunderstandings of Goal 3 - better understanding of the local people - as a mandate for the volunteers to spy in the country, which was a barrier in accepting to work with the volunteers. The staff's emphasis on the cross-cultural goals (Goals 2 and 3) was because they saw Goal 1 as interdependent on the successful integration (meaning acceptance) of the volunteers in their host

organizations and communities. For the US staff, Goal 3 – better understanding of the local people - presented an opportunity to engender change in the American society by bringing back critical global citizens. One staff member took that even further by suggesting that the purpose of Peace Corps was to make development workers implying a commoditized view of the volunteers as products, not simply as both objects and subjects of development or as partners in mutual learning.

The volunteers reflected the Bulgarian program staff understanding of the goals by placing the development goal of the organization as secondary to the cultural exchange goals. Some volunteers (including US staff who were former volunteers) thought that this was not specific to Bulgaria but a worldwide phenomenon because while the profile of the young recent college graduate volunteers had not change, the realities of the places where volunteers went had and a generalist volunteer did not bring higher expertise compared to his college educated colleagues but the benefit of “an enthusiastic native English Speaker” ready to “do whatever”.

The local partners expressed similar views to the local staff. They recognized the work of the volunteers (Goal 1) but appreciated more the opportunity to interact with Americans because of their cultural differences including their optimism. For some, the process of working and living together with the volunteers had resulted in a better understanding of themselves, now that they had something different to compare themselves to (a Reverse Goal 2). Local partners working for government organizations confirmed the staff’s concern that volunteers were sometime used symbolically – to demonstrate acceptance of the new geo-political orientation to the West – and perhaps missed opportunities to develop fruitful partnerships with the volunteer.

The majority of the staff felt that Peace Corps supported the goals of the transition indirectly. More importantly while publicly/formally the goals of the various Peace Corps projects were linked to the goals of transition, the implementation of the projects was disassociate from those higher-level goals. This had the effect of allowing the staff to see opportunities for the continued presence of volunteers in the country after the country had accomplished the goals of transition or after EU membership. Only the program staff of the small-business development program saw a direct impact on the goals of transition. The opinions of the staff aside, Peace Corps/Bulgaria had an unintentional direct impact on the transition by becoming a pioneer in private sector hiring, private housing rental for foreigners, and private banking for foreigners, as the first long-term international volunteer organization in the country.

The large majority of volunteers agreed that Peace Corps was supportive of the dual goals of transition and only a few volunteers were unsure or felt that Peace Corps did not support these processes. Among those who believed that Peace Corps was supportive, there was a considerable range in the extent to which they thought that that was the case but the general sentiment was that the volunteer served as exemplars of a society with a functioning democracy and a market economy. In the group of volunteers who disagreed were volunteers who did not remember being told explicitly to assist with the transition as well as few volunteers who expressed a concern that a mandate to support the dual goals of transition would have contradicted the policy that the volunteers should maintain an apolitical role.

The opinion of the local partners on whether Peace Corps has contributed to the dual goals of transition ranged from “they contributed greatly” to “I think that the total effect is minimal for the changes” to “I don’t think that the volunteers have contributed with anything.” The general agreement was that early volunteers had a greater role (impact) on the transition

because there was a larger need for the type of development assistance and examples that the volunteers offered.

The majority of the staff (close to 60%) believed the Peace Corps' closure in 2013 was either early or timely. The common opinion was that program could have continued to make significant contributions in the areas of teaching English and social work, especially working with children and adults with disabilities, and health education, but that the community and organizational development project could have been phased out. The staff felt that the strategy of placing volunteers in smaller villages and with organization working with "marginal groups" was working since those places continued to request volunteers.

The volunteers split more equally on whether or not the timing of Peace Corps' closure in 2013 was timely. Those who expressed the opinion that the program should have closed earlier or that the closure was timely provided comments that were very similar to the program staff member who were in favor of keeping a reformed program.

The local partners were overwhelmingly in favor of continuing to work with Peace Corps volunteers, although some were concerned that the image of the organization should change to reflect a more egalitarian view of development as a partnership rather than as a modernization project for a Third World country.

Table 20 includes a summary of the language that exemplifies the working of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms in the private discourses. In the next chapter I move to discuss if and how the development rhetoric has translated into actual Peace Corps activities that supported the neoliberal and counter/neoliberal values, practices, and subjectivity articulated in the public and private discourses.

Table 20: Neoliberal and Counter-Neoliberal Mechanisms in the Private Discourses

Discourse	Neoliberal Mechanisms	Counter-Neoliberal Mechanisms
Program Staff	Value: personal responsibility Practice: instrumental/political use of PCVs by the local partners (value of self-interest); commodification of Peace Corps Service (neoliberal governance)	Value: democracy; social justice/equity Practice: collective empowerment of isolated rural communities and minority groups Subjectivity: Goal 1 as two-way interaction; Goal 1 embedded in Goals 2 and 3; PCVs as critical global citizens
Volunteers	Value: free market economy Practice: Westernization, EU integration Subjectivity: market-driven rationality/decision-making; unequal exchange (Goals 2 and 3 then Goal 1); PCVs as U.S. Public Diplomats (value of self-interest)	Value: democracy Practice: alternative development (focus on community development, grassroots development, sustainable development); collective empowerment of isolated rural communities and minority groups; two-way learning process
Local Partners	Practice: capacity building; instrumental use of Peace Corps/Bulgaria/PCVs (value of self-interest) Subjectivity: cultural superiority of Bulgarians; unequal exchange (Goals 2 and 3 then Goal 1); supports power differentials (accepts a Third World country status, especially for Roma communities).	Value: solidarity (living together); democracy, civil society (NGOs) Practice: democracy/democratic decision-making; collective empowerment of isolated rural communities and minority groups Subjectivity: PCVs as critical global citizens; reciprocal exchange (Reverse Goal 2*); supports equalizing power dynamics (rejects a Third World country status)

CHAPTER 8: NEOLIBERALIZATION 101: PEACE CORPS/BULGARIA ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter historicizes the deployment of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria model. It describes the changes in the Peace Corps/Bulgaria programming, including the different project sectors, supplementary programs, external resources, and best practices. The focus is on the identification of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms of social transformation within the various Peace Corps/Bulgaria activities.

SECTOR PROJECTS

During the 1990 meetings between Peace Corps and Bulgarian government officials, they identified three country needs that the volunteers could help with: (1) the shortage of trained English teachers following the announcement that Russian is no longer a compulsory language, (2) working with individual farmers to help them understand how the free enterprise system works, and (3) support for the growing private sector of the economy (CBJ-FY 1992:137-138).

According to the early staff:

*...the initial assessment to go into Bulgaria was done by Peace Corps Headquarters and those are based on requests that the Bulgarian government had. **At the time of course it was really focused on private markets, private economy, moving away from socialism/communism...** Bulgaria was specifically interested in Small Business development and English language because English was the language of commerce. (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine)*

A decision was made to start with English teaching as first project in 1991 and Agriculture and Small Business Development as a second project in 1992. The Environment project was launched later in 1995. Over the years, the scope of these projects changed, including the splitting and merging of some of them, and a new project focusing on youth

opened in 2003, which was an area that was not anticipated as a country need in the early 1990s. Altogether, Bulgaria accepted volunteers in five sector projects and one short-term program:

1. **Teaching English** known as the Education Project (TEFL)
2. **Business Development** known first as the Small Business Development Project (SBD) and later as the Community Economic Development Project (CED)
3. **Environment** known as Environmental Management and Training Project (ENV)
4. **Youth Development** (YD) and
5. **Community and Organizational Development** (COD).
6. **Peace Corps Response (PCR) Program.**

Teaching English (TEFL)

The **Education project** is the only project that operated for the whole duration of the Peace Corps mission in Bulgaria between 1991 and 2013. It started as anticipated with the first group of volunteers arriving in June 1991, but a number of changes were made early (see Table 21). In the Congressional Budget Justification (CBJ) documents, the Education project was initially described as focusing first on teaching at the higher education level - at universities and teacher colleges – and second on teaching in secondary schools (CBJ-FY 1992 through CBJ-FY 1994). Three years later, the project was described as focusing on secondary schools first and then on university level teaching (CBJ-FY 1995) and finally the focus became entirely on teaching in secondary schools (CBJ-FY 1996).

Table 21: Early Changes in the Education Project

CBJ	Project Description
FY 1992	Volunteers will teach English and train teachers in universities, teacher training colleges, and secondary schools throughout Bulgaria.
FY 1993	<i>University Teacher Training:</i> Volunteers are assigned to teacher training colleges where they work to improve students' and teachers' language proficiency and language teaching techniques. Volunteers teach language instruction methodology, supervise practice teaching, and hold language enrichment classes. <i>Advanced English Teaching and Teacher Training:</i> The objective of this project is to increase the proficiency of English majors in institutions of higher learning through use of practical, communicative-based teaching methods. Volunteers will also help faculty counterparts improve their English competency. <i>Secondary School Teaching:</i> Volunteers in this project will teach English to 9th -12th grade students and help English teacher counterparts improve their language skills.
FY 1994	<i>English Teaching and Curriculum Advancement:</i> Volunteers are assigned to teacher training colleges, universities, and secondary schools , where they work to improve students' and teachers' language proficiency. Volunteers in higher education teach language instruction methodology, supervise practice teaching, and hold language enrichment classes.
FY 1995	<i>English Teaching and Curriculum Advancement:</i> The English teaching project is designed to improve the long-term effectiveness of English language instruction in Bulgaria. Volunteers teach in secondary schools and are responsible for a variety of activities to facilitate the English language development of both students and colleagues. Other Volunteers teach English at the university level and train English teachers at teacher training colleges.
FY 1996	During the past year, Volunteers taught English to over 3,000 Bulgarian students in 18 schools .

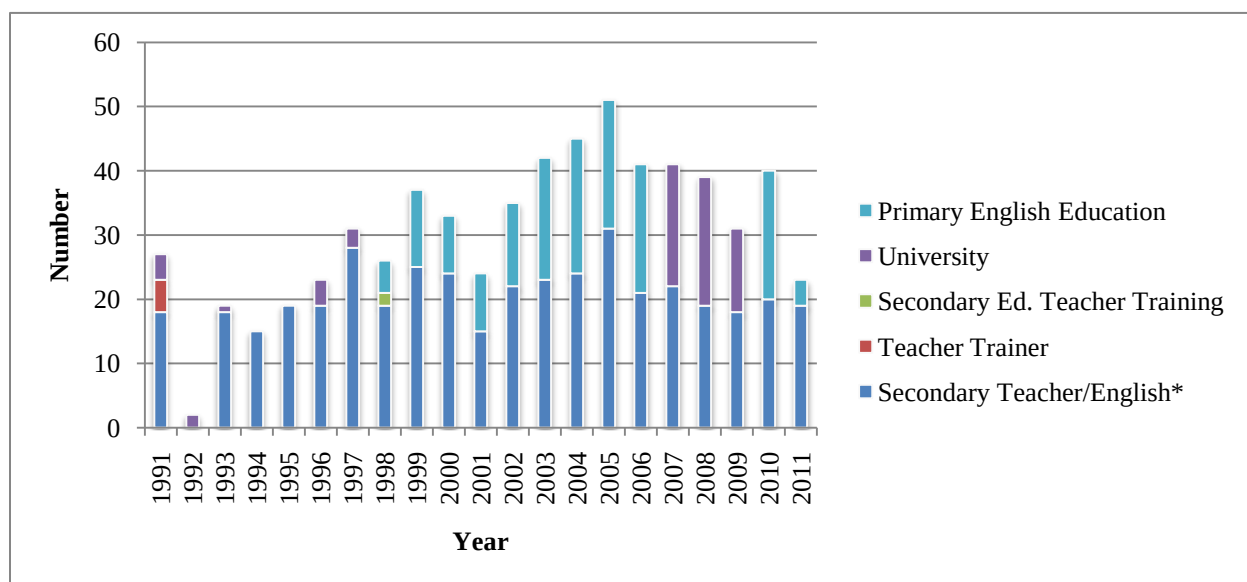
In reality, from the very beginning the Education project was a secondary education project and very few volunteers were assigned to teacher training colleges and universities. The local Bulgarian project manager explained that he changed the name of the project to English Teaching and Curriculum Advancement Project (ETCAP) to be more culturally appropriate as well as the type of host organizations - from regular schools in smaller and disadvantaged communities to specialized schools in the urban centers – with the first group rather than years later as described in the CBJs:

*I made a lot of changes in the program from the very beginning. [...] I first changed the **name** because I told him that every Bulgarian who hears PETCA will think instantly of*

*the joke couple – Petka and Chapai.*⁸⁴ *It was program for advancement of something. I switched it to ETCAP: English Teaching and Curriculum Advancement Project. **Second, they wanted to place the volunteers in poor and small villages, disadvantaged communities and I changed this as well.** I told him that the volunteers wouldn't be happy, which in reality I wasn't sure would be the case, but I thought that this will be a loss of resources. As a teacher in an English Language School, I knew how much the volunteers could help with the communicative English, and I changed this later [...to] **place the volunteers in the Math and Science Schools** because a specialist without English in our modern times will fall behind [...] **we also had a volunteer at the Veliko Tarnovo and Plovdiv Universities because I had a few with MA and Ph.D. [degrees]*** (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)

Indeed, the majority of volunteers from the first Education group came with a “Secondary Teacher/English” profile assignment (18 volunteers) rather than with a “Teacher Trainer” (five) or a “University” assignment (four) (see Figure 43). And until 2011 when the last group of TEFL volunteers was accepted the large majority of new volunteers came with “Secondary Teacher/English” or “Primary English Education” profile assignment.

Figure 43: Number of New TEFL Volunteers by Assignment Category and Year, n= 644



Note: *Between 1998 and 2004 name for the assignment category was "Secondary Ed. Eng. Teaching"

⁸⁴ Chapayev, a Russian soldier and his aide Petka, are popular characters from soviet era Russian jokes that emerged from the novel “Chapayev” (1923) by Dmitriy Furmanov.

In the mid 1990s there was a return to the original host placement strategy when “... we started developing smaller communities and placing volunteers at smaller communities, not English Language Schools, ordinary secondary schools” (BG Program Manager, Interview).

During that period, the primary education project was also initiated within the TEFL program.

The need for the new project was identified by the local partners:

...directors of schools, who kept telling me “You know, the need is in primary. The need is in primary. We don’t have the resources. We don’t have the methodology. We don’t have the teachers, and we don’t have the textbooks. This is starting now. How do we implement that? So, if you can help us with that. (BG Program Manager, Interview)

The pilot was launched in 1998 and in 2003 became a separate Primary Education project for teaching English from 1st through 8th grade after directive of the Ministry of Education, which required foreign language learning to start at a much earlier grade. Then in 2008 the primary and secondary projects merged into one TEFL program in order “...to maximize impact in Bulgarian communities and to optimize the effectiveness of Volunteer support systems and operations” (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.: 19). Assuming that the goals of the project remained stable TEFL volunteers were expected to accomplish three main goals:

1. Improve the **English language** and communication skills in English of Bulgarian students, teachers and community members [generic];
2. Contribute to **the professional and personal development and increased competitiveness in the world market of Bulgarian youth and community members** [human development as neoliberal value/practice]; and
3. Assist schools, institutions and **minority groups in community development** [alternative development] and **capacity building** [human development/neoliberal governance] (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:14, emphasis mine).

From the three goals, the first one - teaching English language - can be thought of as a tool for Westernization and cultural imperialism and as such as an expression of neoliberal globalization. However, I consider it a generic mechanism for social transformation because knowing English language allows the expression of both neoliberal and counter-neoliberal values, as well as because English is the common international language that both neoliberal and counter-neoliberal groups use to spread their messages. The second goal articulates the neoliberal value of competition and the neoliberal practice of individual empowerment embedded in a human development approach. The third goal combines both neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms by including minority groups in community development (the value of indigenous knowledge) in capacity building (human development/neoliberal governance).

In addition to teaching, TEFL volunteers engaged in secondary projects, especially during the summer vacation months. Those projects often involved camps and sports activities for youth and minority populations, English and computer skills courses for adults, small improvements of the school infrastructure (room renovations, equipment for libraries, computer and multimedia classrooms), and outreach activities such as **project-design and management, grant proposal writing, and fundraising** (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:14-16). Among this list of secondary projects the “outreach activities” represent an example of neoliberal governance practice. Those types of outreach activities, however, were not specific to the TEFL project but to Peace Corps/Bulgaria in general.

When looking at the specific TEFL projects mentioned in the CBJs I was able to identify both neoliberal and counter-neoliberal activities, as well as mixed types of activities. There were very few examples of **neoliberal activities** which described the introduction of neoliberal

governance practices by the volunteers. One was an example of the introduction of the new public management model in a school environment and another was an example was of the instrumental use of culture as a resource in marketing:

- **New public management:** “In addition to teaching English in a small mountain town, one Volunteer partnered with community members to convert an unused classroom into a multimedia conference room by adding computer equipment, an overhead projector, and wireless Internet access. The Volunteer trained teachers at the school to use this equipment, and they now effectively incorporate videos and other multimedia assets into their lesson plans. **The room is also used as a movie theater once a week, and donations collected from moviegoers will be used to purchase additional multimedia equipment**” [use of market logic for the management of a public resource] (CBJ-FY 2009);
- **Instrumental use of culture:** “In addition to being a full-time teacher, one Volunteer designed **a program to revive local music traditions** in her town, Teteven. Her SPA-funded project provided a space for music study and money to buy local traditional instruments. Her students now learn about the history and culture of Bulgarian folk music by taking lessons with traditional instruments and student exchange with a neighboring town. Teachers have created a DVD to showcase the students’ talents. The school band that was formed by the project has given many public performances and **enhanced the town’s image as a tourist destination**” (CBJ FY-2008).

Examples of *counter-neoliberal activities* were much more common. The majority of those included activities promoted various forms of counter-neoliberal political activism and the creation of counter-neoliberal subjectivities:

- **Political activism:** “Another Volunteer guided her *students* in **editing, publishing and marketing an English language newspaper** [promotes the value of democracy/freedom of speech, assuming that the newsletter was distributed for non-profit purposes] (CBJ-FY 1997); **Minority integration** training [promotion of social rights] (CBJs FY 2007 through 2009); Volunteers also **raise awareness of the dangers of human traffickers** who prey on vulnerable and unsuspecting *youth* and force them to work in slave-like conditions [promotion of economic rights] (CBJs FY 2005 through 2009):
- **Volunteering as a partner of the state:** “In addition, she and her students visit *a local orphanage* twice a week **to assist in the care of children** (CBJ-FY 1997);
- **Cultural relativism:** “Volunteers increase their *students’* knowledge about modern American society and their **appreciation of different cultural values and lifestyles** through both classroom and extracurricular activities (CBJ-FY 1997); **Diversity** trainings (CBJs FY 2005/2006);
- **Two-way interaction:** “Volunteers have augmented their education curriculum by instituting **“pen-pal” programs**” (CBJ-FY 1997).

The TEFL project also had a signature ***mixed activity***, which combined a neoliberal practice (needs/issues-based competition approach) with a counter-neoliberal value (cooperation) to support a counter-neoliberal practice (collective social empowerment of women):

One Volunteer created the national **Women’s Issues Essay Contest**. The project was **sponsored by** the Bulgarian Association of Women, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science, and the American University in Bulgaria [value of cooperation]. Over 850 entries were received, with winning essays compiled in a book and distributed to contestants, sponsors, and collaborating institutions. The project was a resounding

success, resulting in improved English language skills of Bulgarian *students* and a **broader understanding about the role of women in Bulgarian society** (CBJs FY 1998 through 2002).

Overall, the goals of the Education project centered on generic and human development approaches to social transformation through English Teaching that supported the working of both neoliberal and especially of counter-neoliberal mechanisms. The signature TEFL activity illustrated the intermixing of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms.

Business Development (SBD and CED)

The **Business Development** project underwent the most dramatic changes. It started out as a Small-Business Development (SBD) program in 1992 to assist interested parties - local business and municipal enterprises - **to adapt to the newly liberalized business climate and in the process of privatizing** (CBJ-FY1992:169-170, emphasis mine). From the CBJs it seems that the initial placement strategy for the Small Business program was to place volunteers with mayors' offices, local business associations, and commercial banks (CBJ-FY 1993). This changed to volunteers working with “mayors' offices, banks, and local business associations, and in resource centers” (CBJ-FY 1994) and finally to volunteers working with small business owners and entrepreneurs from Multi-Link Resource Centers that were “conceived of and developed by Peace Corps” with only some volunteers assigned to municipal offices (CBJ-FY 1995). Description of the project in the early years is included in Table 22.

Table 22: Early Changes in the Small Business Development Project

CBJ	Project Description
FY 1993	<i>Small Business Advisors:</i> The goal of this project is to assist interested parties in adapting to the newly liberalized business climate. Volunteers will work with the mayor's office or local business association staff to provide advisory services to local business people.; <i>Business Resource Specialists:</i> Volunteers will provide information, training, and technical advice to local private businesses and state and municipal enterprises in the process of privatizing.; <i>Banking Advisors:</i> This project places Volunteers in commercial banks , where they will assist in creating and managing a small business lending unit. Volunteers will also provide training and technical assistance to bank staff.
FY 1994	<i>Project Enterprise: Small Business Development</i> The goal of this project is to assist interested parties in adapting to the newly liberalized business climate. Volunteers will work with mayors' offices, banks, local business associations, and in resource centers to provide business advisory services in response to local business needs.
FY 1995	<i>Project Enterprise:</i> Volunteers work with small business owners and entrepreneurs to provide business skills training and resource information. Most of the Volunteers are assigned to one of six Multi-Link Resource Centers in cities throughout Bulgaria. These centers, conceived of and developed by Peace Corps /Bulgaria, are clearinghouses for information about small business development, environmental protection and English teaching. This project was one of the first of its kind to be established in Central and Eastern Europe. The centers are equipped with computers, training equipment and a library and are easily accessible to citizens at the local level. Volunteers assigned to municipal offices provide seminars as well as individual assistance to entrepreneurs and are also working to organize satellite business centers.

In the project descriptions in the CBJs, the area of agriculture was missing entirely as one of the areas within the Small Business Development project, also known as “Project Enterprise”, which is a departure from the original country needs assessment and plans.⁸⁵ At the same time, the Multi-Link Resource Centers were equipped to provide information in the other areas of interest to the government: environmental protection and English teaching. When the Environment project was launched in 1995, the Multi-Link Centers became Business Centers. “Project Enterprise” was funded through the European Business Development Program (EBDP),

⁸⁵ In total there were only four volunteers with an agriculture assignment or profile that arrived in the country and this was later in 1996, 1997, and 1998.

which was one of several primary mechanisms for Peace Corps collaboration with USAID at the time:

The European Business Development Program (EBDP): Peace Corps Volunteers provide technical assistance, training, and business information through local public and private organizations **to contribute to the development of free market economies** in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltics. Under the auspices of the EBDP, Peace Corps Volunteers in Poland and Bulgaria provide technical assistance at newly-established business centers. The program was funded by A.I.D. at approximately \$250.000 in FY92. (CBJ-FY 1994:8, emphasis mine)

The fact that the SBD sector project was funded substantially, if not entirely, through an USAID grant underscores the foreign policy interest of opening a Peace Corps program in Bulgaria (and in other Eastern European countries). More importantly, the fact that the centers were “conceived of and developed by Peace Corps /Bulgaria” was a significant departure from the Peace Corps approach of placing volunteers with already existing organizations.

The SBD sector project operated as the USAID Project Enterprise for two 3-year cycles.⁸⁶ In that period Peace Corps established and operated a total of 11 such centers in the country known as American-Bulgarian Business Centers.⁸⁷ The mission of Project Enterprise was:

1. To provide quality service to **our clients** [neoliberal governance];
2. To provide **technical assistance** to individuals and organizations in business, government and education [neoliberal subjectivity: one-way interaction];

⁸⁶ The first country director, Azzedine Downes, prepared the first project proposal, while APCD-SBD Jack Godwin prepared the second one.

⁸⁷ The American-Bulgarian Business Centers were located in Blagoevgrad, Gabrovo, Gorna Oryahovitsa, Haskovo, Kardzhali, Kyustendil, Pleven, Plovdiv, Sliven, Stara Zagora and Vidin.

3. To provide opportunities for education and training in the field of business administration [generic];
4. To sponsor and participate in seminars, trade shows, and conferences on a consistent basis [generic];
5. To conduct and collect research of local market conditions on a continuous basis for use by the Business Centers, Bulgarian business professionals, and **cooperating organizations** [counter-neoliberal];
6. To incorporate the Business Centers as **non-profit associations** [alternative development/counter-neoliberal practice], and to become financially independent centers for the purpose of **free enterprise development** and education [neoliberal value/goal].⁸⁸

Out of the six mission goals, two articulate neoliberal values, governance, and subjectivity, two are generic, one invokes the counter-neoliberal value of cooperation, and one is a mix of community development practice and a neoliberal value. As mentioned earlier, in the CBJs the goal of the SBD project was “to assist interested parties in **adapting to the newly liberalized business climate**” (CBJ-FY 1994:165), which means that the volunteers were expected to facilitate processes of neoliberal transformation.

The sample of SBD activities in the CBJs shows that like their “principal duties,”⁸⁹ which mirror the rhetoric of the mission goals, additional SBD activities involved primarily the

⁸⁸ Source: “About Project Enterprise” document from the archive of B4 SBD Pat McClung.

⁸⁹ The principal duties of SBD volunteers were to serve as (1) **Management Consultant**: The Business Consultant works with a variety of organizations. The scope of the Business Consultant's consulting activities include, but are not limited to accounting, business communication, ethics, financial services, human resource management, information systems, marketing, writing business plans, and writing & presenting seminars. The focus depends on the needs of the client and the expertise of the consultant. The Business Consultant is required to work with as many clients as possible, and may not work with one company exclusively; (2) **Teacher/Trainer**: The purpose of this activity is to share knowledge and know-how. The Business Consultant organizes and/or delivers seminars and workshops. As a teacher/trainer the PCV may participate in Junior Achievement or other similar programs. The PCV may also teach courses in Business English. The PCV's training activities also encompass work with high school or college students who work as interns at the business center; and (3) **Information Resource**: As an

implementation of neoliberal practices that focused on the value of self-sufficiency and individual empowerment. For example: “In addition, the Business Center in Plovdiv was instrumental in seeing a community project to fruition. This project was designed **to fight unemployment** among women **by providing them with the skills necessary to start their own business** (CBJ-FY 1997).

The latter, however, was not necessarily to the exclusion of any counter-neoliberal activity. Below are two examples of activities that supported both individual and collective social empowerment or the parallel working of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms:

- “At the Business Center in Stara Zagora, Volunteers developed an accounting and reporting system for agricultural cooperatives. This system serves as a model to address the financial and accounting needs of many **cooperatives and other private farms** in Bulgaria” (CBJ-FY 1997);
- “One Volunteer was instrumental in forming a Youth information Consulting Office designed to help young people **prepare for their future, and to encourage them to promote positive changes for their community and country**” (CBJ-FY 1998).

Both in the initial assessment for the SBD project (CBJ FY 1993) and in the PC/B Legacy Book it mentions that the SBD volunteers participated in **privatization** processes, but they did not include any examples. From my volunteer survey it is not clear what kind of privatization the volunteers supported but in Ashabranner (1994) there is evidence - in a description of a picture with Bulgaria SBD Volunteers in Stara Zagora- that it was private privatization: “They are involved in everything from helping start a peanut butter factory to

Information Resource, the Business Consultant produces primary research and/or collects and distributes secondary research (printed material as well as electronic media) for individuals and organizations in all walks of life: business, government, education, private, public, non-profit. Source: “About Project Enterprise” document from the archive of B4 SBD Pat McClung.

assisting a local government-run radio and television station to become privately owned.

They are also helping a local trade school (shown here) whose students come from minority groups, broken homes, and orphanages” (Ashabranner 1994:66, emphasis mine).

There are conflicting assessments about the success of the SBD project by the local program staff. Some thought that both the concept and implementation were good:

*From the very beginning, **I think the concept was very good** because we were talking about developing Bulgaria, helping Bulgaria in the transition period to market economy so the initial concept was to create SBD centers to staff them with Volunteers and counterparts and **to start actually helping Bulgarian entrepreneurs who were making their first steps in the market economy to be able to develop their own small or medium sized businesses.** (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Others felt that the concept was good but that the implementation was problematic.

Among those were concerns about the delay of the project, which impacted volunteer satisfaction with their assignments, and the integration of the centers within the communities:

I took over as country director to find a ridiculous program had been conceived to establish "business advisory centers" in some of the Bulgarian towns. A huge request for funds had been written to USAID (and granted) for expensive computers and audio-visual equipment. This equipment didn't arrive until well into the volunteers' service. And, when it did arrive it was the wrong wiring for Bulgarian electricity!! Expensive transformers had to be ordered and another wait ensued. Throughout this wait there were 25 volunteers with literally nothing to do. (Country Director, e-mail, emphasis mine)

*You know these business development centers [...] they were amazing institutions but they were set up kind of...they **worked but they were not that well integrated within the communities** but over time they became more and more a part of the community. (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Finally, there were those who questioned the concept and therefore advocated a change in the program. First, the work conditions at the centers were a reversal of the power dynamics in a typical volunteer placement that supported equalizing power dynamics with volunteers working within a team of Bulgarians under the supervision of a Bulgarian counterpart, who may or may

not know English, with resources that are comparable to the local conditions. At the American-Bulgarian centers the work conditions supported power differentials:

The centers are staffed by one or more PCVs, a bi-lingual Bulgarian counterpart, and one or more interns. Each center is equipped with a personal computer with printer, modem, and software, a fax machine, photocopier, and a library of books, periodicals, and other printed material. The centers have electronic mail linked to the Internet.⁹⁰

The result was volunteers who were not well integrated in the community: *...we had PCVs who as I said didn't know the language, didn't know the culture very well and on top of that were using funds, private funds, to ...not all of them, to support their enhanced lifestyle. [...] these were not very young volunteers*" (Country Director, Interview).

The fact that Peace Corps/Bulgaria established those centers and that the volunteers run those centers was contrary to the idea that Peace Corps supports sustainable human development.

*It is funny. ...\$500,000 is not a lot of money for USAID, you know. It is a lot of money for Peace Corps because normally there isn't funding to run a Peace Corps program. And **Peace Corps Washington wasn't entirely comfortable with that.** There was just too much money and it was somehow...I don't know how to say it...it was...they just felt that there was too much money involved and **because Peace Corps really just prefers to supply the human resource.*** (US Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)

Moreover, since only SBD volunteers had access to those resources it created inequalities among the volunteers and tensions when SBD volunteers were unwilling to share resources with TEFL volunteers at the same site. Then, there was the concern that the centers were not set up in a way that the local community can utilize them: *"...we started comparing those really very expensive and well equipped centers to luxurious appliances that were of no big use to those they were designed to serve because people didn't know how to use them, how to press the buttons on them"* (BG Program Manager, Interview).

⁹⁰ Source: "About Project Enterprise" document from the archive of B4 SBD Pat McClung.

Following an assessment of the program in the mid-1990s a decision was made that the program needed to be reformed for a variety of reasons:

- **The needs have changed:** *...this may have been perceived as a need for additional support in the mid-1990s but as the general business education of the local population continued to grow, that was no longer the need let's say in early 2000. (BG APCD – Programming & Training, Interview);*
- **The approach did not work:** *It was the same model that they had tried to use in Russia and it didn't work. So, we changed the program. (Country Director, Interview);*
- **The funding was ending:** *...it was actually because USAID was expiring, coming to an end and of course we had to, you know, adjust the program.” (BG Program Manager, Interview).*

In 1996 Peace Corps began to try to turn over the administration of the Business Centers to local organizations - municipalities and chambers of commerce – and the focus of the SBD project shifted to broader issues of administration capacity building for provision of business services and local economic development. The adoptive local entities took responsibility of all operational expenses, while Peace Corps' responsibility was narrowed to provide only the volunteers. SBD placements diversified to include organizations such as Junior Achievement, which was established with the help of an SBD volunteer, business centers managed by municipalities or other entities (CBJ-FY 1998) and local and regional economic agencies and secondary schools (CBJ-FY 1999).

In 1997 the project was renamed to **Community Economic Development (CED)** with volunteers assisting municipal and regional administrations and local NGOs in the creation of

policies for community economic development, small and medium enterprise development, and better business administration. The CED project goals included:

1. Develop the **capacity of district and municipal administrations** [neoliberal governance] and local NGOs to promote **community** economic development [alternative development/counter-neoliberal practice];
2. Promote **community involvement in the economic development activities** and enhance the development potential of the community [alternative development/counter-neoliberal practice];
3. Improve the quality of products and services of local entrepreneurs and enterprises and expand their business activities [generic]. (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:22)

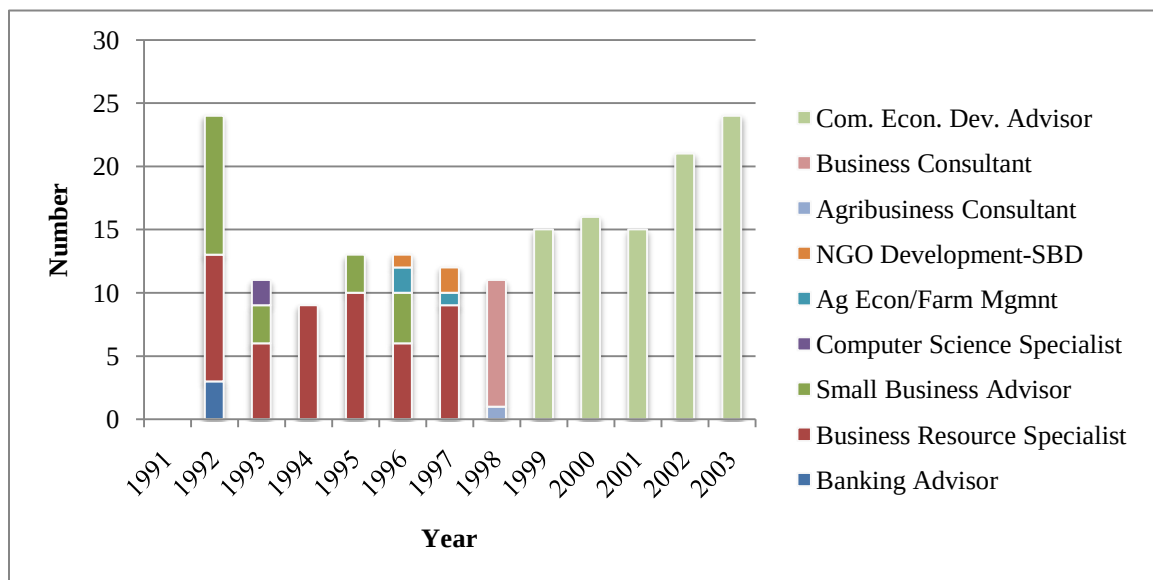
The first goal represents neoliberal governance through capacity building, while the second goal is a counter-neoliberal practice in support of democratic decision-making. I categorize the third goal as generic because depending on the products and services and the nature of the business expansion (free or fair trade) it could exemplify either neoliberal or counter-neoliberal mechanisms. Despite the change in the name, goals, and scope of the project, according to the CBJ descriptions the CED volunteers continued to engage in predominantly neoliberal activities:

- **New public management:** “Through consultations with NGOs on the topics of education, women's issues, local museums and theatres, one Volunteer assisted the NGOs with ideas for **designing projects, enhancing operations and approaching funding agencies** (CBJ-FY 2000, emphasis mine); “One Volunteer in Smolyan supported her sponsoring agency in **developing a market-oriented approach to managing the local theater**” (CBJ-FY 2002, emphasis mine);

- **Individual empowerment projects:** “One volunteer organized an extensive job training program in Stara Zagora for the teenage girls from the local orphanage. Topics covered included computers, cooking, cosmetology, and clothing design” (CBJ-FY 2000).

Then, in 2004 the language shifted from working with clients (creating neoliberal subjectivities) to working with citizens (creating counter-neoliberal subjectivities): “Volunteers work with local governments and NGOs to instill project viability, to promote economic progress, **and to strengthen citizens’ participation in community business activities**” (CBJ-FY 2004:70). The latter is reflective of the decision to merge the CED and the Environment program to form a new Community and Organizational Development (COD) program, which emphasized sustainable development: economic growth, environmental protection, and social progress rather than economic growth alone (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:26). Figure 44 shows how the profile of the SBD/CED volunteers changed in 1998 to match the new project framework.

Figure 44: Number of New SBD/CED Volunteers by Assignment Category and Year, n=184



Overall, the goals of the SBD project are explicitly supportive of the neoliberal policy of liberalization and there is evidence that volunteers engaged in processes of neoliberal privatization and the introduction of neoliberal governance practices (the new public management model). SBD volunteer activities exemplified mostly neoliberal practices, although they were not precluded from engaging in counter-neoliberal practices at the same time (i.e. supporting both private firms and agricultural cooperatives). When the SBD project transformed into the CED project volunteers continued to implement mostly neoliberal activities but by the early 2000s the CED project changed its language from working with clients to working with citizens. This change, however, falls within the context of an agency-wide shift in the development rhetoric of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program from a focus on market building to a focus on democracy building.

Environment (ENV)

The purpose of the **Environment project** (1995 – 2003) was “...to provide local authorities and communities with advice on environmental management and education” (CBJ-FY 1996:118). It began as a mini-project with five volunteers who established the project frameworks with the current Program and Training Officer. When the first Bulgarian project manager was hired in 1996 a decision was made to enter the nature park and national park structures, and the project evolved into a park project:

These were new structures and they needed a lot of help; they had small staff but had the opportunity to provide a small apartment because the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests said yes. And so that is how we started. Later we had volunteers in many NGOs but then I was able to convince Peace Corps that they should cover housing. [...] schools [...] there were municipalities but those were difficult partnerships. (BG Program Manager, Interview)

By 2001 the project had diversified its placements and reported volunteers working with schools, NGOs, park administrations, local governments, youth centers and forestry units (CBJ-FY 2001:69). From all volunteers, ENV volunteers had the strongest mandate to support environmental advocacy networks at all levels: “...**to facilitate cooperation** between NGOs and local, national, and international environmental organizations to develop a dynamic network for environmental information exchange and technical assistance” (CBJ-FY 1999:64, emphasis mine). Specifically, the ENV project goals were to:

1. Raise the overall level of **environmental awareness** of Bulgarian communities and improve their local environment [counter-neoliberal practice];
2. Work toward enhancement and **conservation of natural resources** and develop and introduce practices for their **sustainable use** [counter-neoliberal practice];
3. Improve the **organizational capacity of local organizations** which deal with environmental issues [neoliberal governance]. (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:23)

The first two goals promote environmentalism as a form of collective empowerment both of which are counter-neoliberal practices. The last one focuses on capacity building, which is an example of neoliberal governance.

In the CBJs the large majority of ENV activities were about various forms of environmental/nature activities such as creating environmental curriculums, clean-ups, tree and flower planting, excursions and environmental camps in natural regions for children and youth. Other ENV **counter-neoliberal** activities supported other forms of political activism, collective social empowerment and the creation of critical local and global citizenship:

- **Political activism:** “One Volunteer wrote a book for private forest land owners, in cooperation with a local state forestry officer, to **help the new landowners learn about**

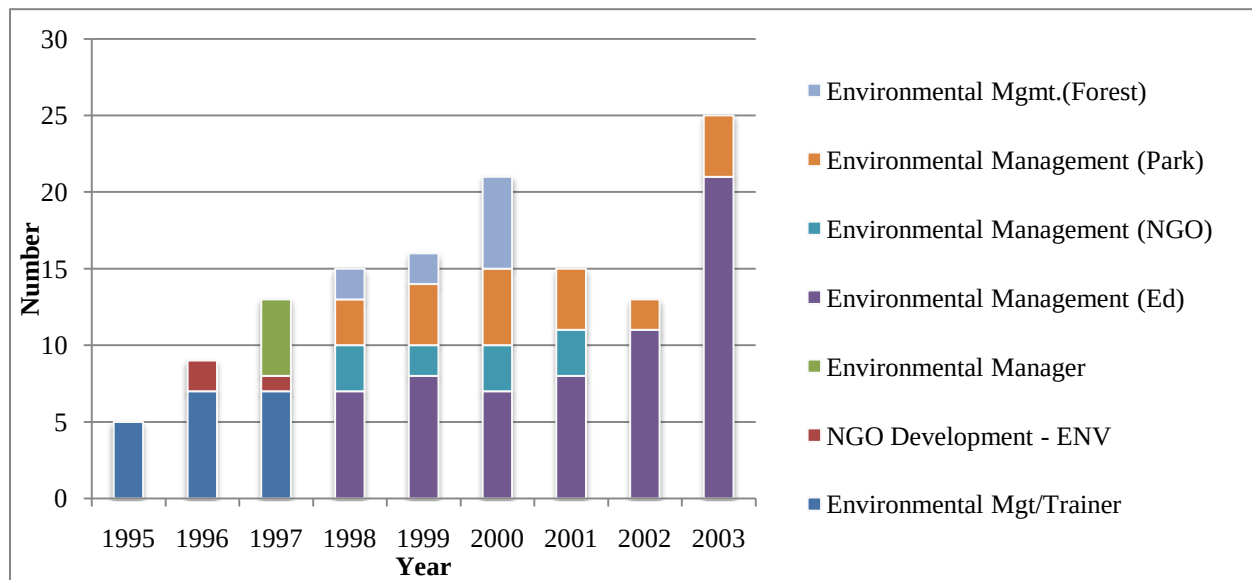
the rights, duties, options, and methods for managing their reinstated forests and lands” [promotes economic rights] (CBJ-FY 2001, emphasis mine);

- **Collective social empowerment:**“... to educate and **empower communities** to understand and address environmental problems and to develop and implement **community-based environmental initiatives**” (CBJ-FY 1997, emphasis mine); “...the creation of an arboretum and outdoor environmental facility, **developed in cooperation** with city and NGO officials and local businesses” (CBJ-FY 1999, emphasis mine); “Volunteers working in 11 municipalities have **facilitated the development of an active network of *Municipal Environmental Specialists*** who regularly exchange information, experiences, and ideas” (CBJ-FY 2000, emphasis mine);
- **Critical local/global citizenship:** “Approximately 1500 students conducted field research on environmental quality, flora and fauna surveys, and water quality testing. **The results were shared with local government and NGO officials**” (CBJ-FY 2000); Earth Day, World Environmental Day and World Water Day celebrations [environmentalism and critical global citizenship] (CBJs FY 1999 through 2005).

Despite the overall counter-neoliberal ethos of the Environment project, there is evidence that even ENV volunteers participated in **neoliberal practices** around the promotion of ecotourism. For example, “Volunteers helped organize environmental awareness campaigns, worked for establishing community environmental awareness centers, and were actively involved in **the promotion of ecotourism development activities**” (CBJ-FY 2005, emphasis mine). Ecotourism falls under the category of a neoliberal practices because it exemplifies the instrumental use of natural resources for tourism (Duffy and Moore 2010; Duffy 2008; Fletcher and Neves 2012; Kline and Slocum 2015; Mosedale 2016).

Figure 45 shows that almost all ENV volunteers came with a “management” profile. Those included volunteers who specialized in the management of forests, parks, NGOs, and educational organizations.

Figure 45: Number of New ENV Volunteers by Assignment Category and Years, n=132



Overall, the Environment project is the most explicitly supportive of counter-neoliberal practices around the promotion of environmentalism, as well as the values of cooperation and collective social empowerment. However, there is also evidence that some volunteers engaged in neoliberal practices where nature was used instrumentally (ecotourism).

Youth Development (YD)

The **Youth Development (YD)** project (2003 – 2013) emerged to support two national initiatives: “...the Ministry of Youth and Sport’s initiative to provide all youth with greater opportunities for **personal development** and the State Agency for Child Protection’s initiative to

improve the conditions of the more than 30,000 **children living in orphanages and other state institutions**” (CBJ-FY 2006:80, emphasis mine). The first initiative exemplifies the human development/neoliberal governance approach to development, while the second one the promotion of social rights (counter-neoliberal practice). However, the notion that the volunteers acted in support of the Bulgarian government by “...develop[ing] the **community support networks** necessary to prevent the institutionalization of a new generation of at-risk children”(CBJ-FY 2005:78, emphasis mine), indicates that the volunteers helped prepare the transferring of social welfare functions from the state to local community actors (neoliberal governance). In this sense both national initiatives promote neoliberal governance. Later the YD project added a third counter-neoliberal national initiative – to contribute to the national effort to combat human trafficking in Bulgaria (CBJ-FY 2008). Specifically, the YD project goals were to:

1. Work directly with youth [generic];
2. **Build the capacity of youth service providers and youth-serving organizations** [human development/neoliberal governance];
3. Build parental and **community support** for youth development [alternative development]. (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:32)

The three goals combine a generic, neoliberal/human development and alternative development perspectives. The second goal is most neoliberal in its articulation as it combines the capacity building and government by proxy neoliberal governance mechanisms (social service delivery NGOs). The ***parallel deployment of approaches*** was also evident in the CBJ descriptions of YD activities:

In 2005, Volunteers and their partners organized camps and after-school programs to provide **opportunities for leadership, life, and career skills development** [individual empowerment]; community service; and **tolerance building for ethnically diverse young people** [cultural relativism] living in and out of institutions. Examples of **collaborative accomplishments** include establishing Bulgaria's only youth-operated movie theater, encouraging youth leadership for multiple community organizations and student councils, and creating numerous youth volunteer clubs [collective social empowerment]. (CBJ-FY 2007)

In the above example, the volunteer activities that focused on individual empowerment (opportunities) represent neoliberal mechanisms, while the volunteer activities that focused on collective empowerment (collaborative accomplishments) represent counter-neoliberal mechanisms. Like, the TEFL and SBD/CED volunteers, YD volunteers also helped create ***mixed activities*** that combined neoliberal with counter-neoliberal mechanisms. For example,

One Volunteer worked with an NGO focused on Roma community development **to help create a community center** [counter-neoliberal]. The center offers classes in English for youth and women, leads youth and sports camps, and conducts **life skills classes** [neoliberal] for women **to help improve Roma participation in mainstream Bulgarian society** [counter-neoliberal] (CBJ-FY 2009, emphasis mine).

In the above example, the activity combines a counter-neoliberal practice (collective social empowerment through community participation) with a neoliberal practice (individual empowerment through life-skills classes) to support a counter-neoliberal value/goal (social equity).

According to the staff, at the time when the YD project was initiated it was a pioneer project for Peace Corps. Accordingly, the design of the project involved some experiential learning:⁹¹

*From the very beginning we shot in the dark. [...] But after the first group, we actually, these 6 volunteers helped us identify the needs in this specific field. [...] step-by-step, year-by-year, actually **the three major sectors they just appeared themselves: children with disabilities, de-institutionalization, and integration of the Roma children** who were actually part of these orphanages but they have families so their place was not there. They had to be part of the normal, regular schools. (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)*

From the three major-sectors that emerged - *children with disabilities, de-institutionalization, and integration of the Roma children* – the process of de-institutionalization⁹² is an example of the neoliberal policy of **welfare privatization**. Indeed there is evidence that some volunteers were active partners in such processes to the extent that the creation of a national family based foster system typically involves the contracting out of state responsibilities to private/non-profit actors: “Sara [YD B14] worked actively on improvement of communication within child welfare and unified best practices in light of the national **transition from institutional based care to a foster family based system**” (Peace Corps Bulgaria 2011 Oblast Impact Sheet, p.24, emphasis mine). Other volunteers were passive supporters of welfare privatization by being placed with organizations that provided state-delegated activities for children with disabilities such as the Centers for Social Rehabilitation and Integration.⁹³ The focus on Roma integration aligned the YD projects with the implementation of

⁹¹ In 2010, Peace Corps reports only seven countries in the Europe, Mediterranean, and Asia (MEA) region with a YD project: Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Jordan, Morocco, the Philippines, Ukraine, and Mongolia (PC 2010:61-62).

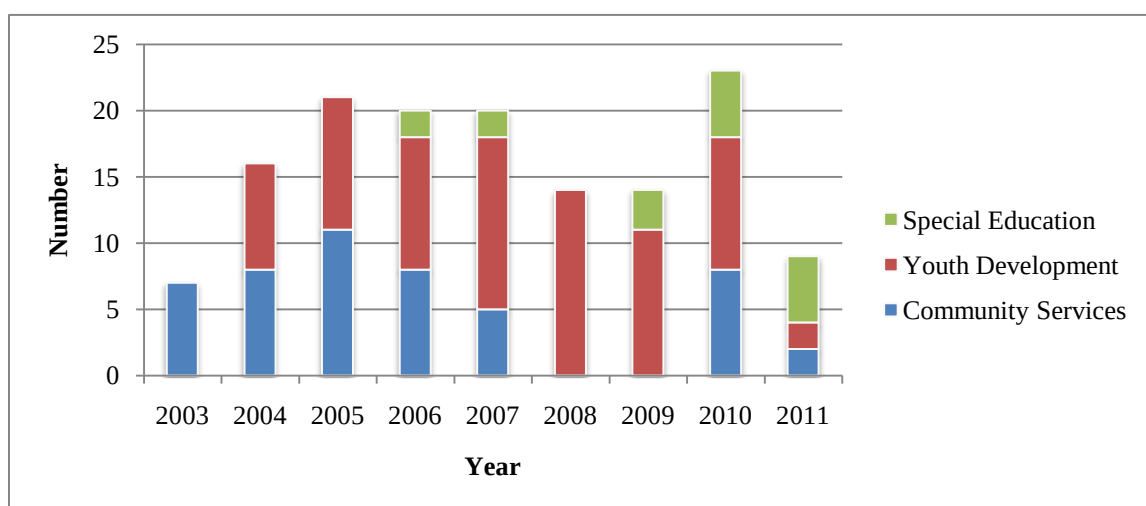
⁹² In Bulgaria, the de-institutionalization of children in residential care was implemented through the Child Welfare Reform Project (2001-2006) funded by the World Bank: Source: World Bank. 2016. “Child Welfare Reform Project.” Retrieved February 11 (<http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P064536/child-welfare-reform-project?lang=en>).

⁹³ State and municipality delegated activities in Bulgaria are regulated under the Social Assistance Act (1998), the Rules for implementation of the Social Assistance Act, and the Tariff on Fees for Social Services Funded from the Republican Budget, approved by CoM Decree No. 91/21.04.2003. Source: Government of Bulgaria, Ministry of

changes required for EU accession (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:30). In the examples of YD activities above it is clear that while the goal of Roma integration requires equalizing power dynamics (counter-neoliberal value), the volunteers often adopted a human development approach focusing on individual empowerment (neoliberal practice).

Overall, the history of the YD project demonstrates the parallel use of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms for social transformation as well the combination of counter-neoliberal values with neoliberal practices. The main neoliberal mechanism was the direct and indirect involvement of volunteers in the implementation of welfare privatization. The main key counter-neoliberal practice was the support for the anti-trafficking initiative in the country. Figure 46 shows that while the larger proportion of the YD volunteers came with a generalist “youth development” profile.

Figure 46: Number of New YD Volunteers by Assignment Category and Year, n=144



Community and Organizational Development (COD)

Lastly, the **Community and Organizational Development (COD)** project was created in 2004 from the merger of the Community Economic Development and the Environment projects. It was a unique sector project for Peace Corps worldwide, although Peace Corps Headquarters continued to treat it as a type of a Business Development sector project in the CBJs. The main goal of the project was to “...build greater cooperation at the grass-roots level as Bulgarian communities work towards a democratic civil society and **improved quality of life**” (CBJ-FY 2005:79-80, emphasis mine). The specific goals of the project were a mix of the CED and ENV project goals:

1. Improve **administrative capacity** in local organizations [neoliberal governance];
2. Increase **environmental awareness and involvement** [counter-neoliberal practice];
3. Improve ability to succeed in the market place [generic]. (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:26)

Accordingly, COD activities continued to be a mix of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal practices: “In 2004, Volunteers worked on municipal infrastructure projects, assisted with tourism development and promotion, organized environmental education activities, consulted and trained entrepreneurs and small- and medium-sized businesses, and taught Junior Achievement classes, among other work” (CBJ-FY 2006).

The new emphasis was on “... help[ing] communities leverage European Union structural funds through improved **project design and management**” (CBJ-FY 2006 through CBJ-FY 2008). Peace Corps’ project design and management (PDM) model combined both neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms (Peace Corps Bulgaria 2003). It reinforced the philosophy of community participation in the design and management of community projects through assets-based community assessment (alternative development). At the same time it also

included a series of new management model steps (neoliberal governance) such as the selection of a best strategy based on a cost-benefit analysis (strengths and weaknesses), results-based goal setting, feasibility test, measurable tasks, monitoring and evaluation plan. In the PDM model, grant writing was part of the resource development step following the completion of the project design process. Through their PDM trainings Peace Corps/Bulgaria introduced the volunteers and their counterparts to this management framework. In addition, Peace Corps/Bulgaria provided both the volunteers and their local partners with opportunities to practice articulating this new framework through its external resources programs. Peace Corps/Bulgaria, however, did not have control over whether or not the volunteers included community members in the design and implementation of community projects/grants.

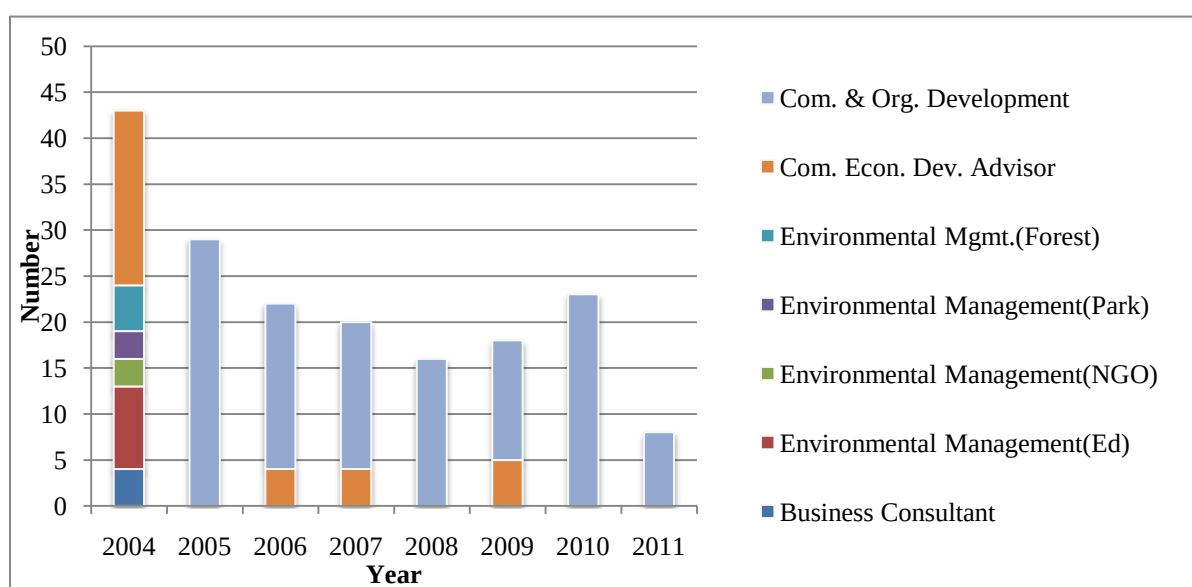
The other important aspect of the project was that COD volunteers were increasingly placed in smaller municipalities (towns and villages) and away from larger municipalities and cities. A move that reflected the intersection of two trends: one concerned changes in the country and the organizations that Peace Corps worked with and the other changes in the volunteer profile:

*...within that 10-year period, the big municipalities, they were doing OK. They didn't need assistance. And something else. At the beginning when I started with Peace corps, most of the volunteers who were coming they were quite... many of them were young but well educated and with some experience but then **step-by-step we ... started to receive very young volunteers with not much professional experience** and you know for the big municipalities, I mean, we couldn't provide them the human resources, the specialists that they needed already[...] That's why we focused on working with small communities and where those generalists which we were receiving, they were able to be much more productive.... more useful. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine).*

In this sense, the merger of the ENV and CED projects “...was really kind of pragmatic; it was just kind of an effort to align all customer expectations, right, and service delivery formula” (Country Director, Interview). The fact that the volunteer profile was a factor in the

shaping of Peace Corps programming is important because it complicates the notion that Peace Corps can “help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women” (Goal 1). Clearly, when Peace Corps/Bulgaria did not receive volunteers that could meet the identified country needs, it focused on finding organizations that could use the type of volunteers that were sent to the country (that were interested in service). In Figure 47, it shows that the large majority of the volunteers came with a generalist “Com & Org. Development” profile.

Figure 47: Number of New COD Volunteers by Assignment Category and Year, n=179



Peace Corps Response (PCR) Program

In addition to the sector projects in the last three years of its operation Peace Corps/Bulgaria opened a short-term **Peace Corps Response (PCR) Program**, which at the time accepted only RPCVs. PCR volunteers worked on very specific projects in the areas of organizational development, volunteerism, and special education, for up to 12 months. Most of

the 2012 and 2013 volunteers were placed with organizations that were identified as strategic legacy partners for the purpose of transitioning Peace Corps resources and tools at the closure of the mission (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:34). Some of the program staff believed that PCR, which focused on technical assistance and did not place expectations for cross-cultural exchange like the regular two-year program does, was better suited to Bulgaria's needs in the late 2010s:

Response Corps reflected very well the needs of Bulgaria in the recent years when we actually no longer needed exposure to a PCV to learn things about the USA because there are so many sources of information and we meet international people every day even in the smallest places and ...now being part of the global village it's not a priority to have a PCV for 2 years at your place to be able to get information about US culture, politics, history, etc. (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview)

In critical assessments of international volunteer programs, short-term assignments, such as PCR, are associated with the professionalization/commodification of volunteer work and the reinforcement of cultural stereotypes. In the Bulgaria case, however, since all PCR volunteers were former RPCVs they were more likely to have cultural relativist subjectivity. Moreover, since half of the PCR volunteers were Bulgaria RPCVs (10 out of 21) they were already acquainted with the specifics of the Bulgarian culture and language. In the latter sense, the PCR program concerns more the introduction of short-term international volunteer programs in the Bulgarian context (normalizing the practice) rather than the creation of neoliberal volunteer subjectivities. In addition, the PCR volunteers were channeling neoliberal subjectivity through the Peace Corps/Bulgaria neoliberal legacy resources and tools that they were tasked to spread.

SECONDARY PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES

Agency-Wide Initiatives

Throughout the years the Peace Corps/Bulgaria supported five agency-wide initiatives that all volunteers could participate including: the Information and Communications

Technologies Initiative (ICT), Women in Development/Gender and Development Initiative (WID/GAD), Anti-Trafficking in Persons (ATIP), the HIV/AIDS Prevention Initiative, and Volunteerism and Service Learning (V2).

The **Information and Communications Technologies Initiative** (ICT) was an “...ongoing effort to formally focus on the use of technology to reach development goals” (Peace Corps 2003:36). All volunteers were encouraged to integrate digital tools such as radio, television, as well as computers, and the Internet in their projects. The SBD Project Enterprise explicitly included ICT as an embedded feature of the Business Resource Centers. Many of the other volunteers also included formally ICT in their activities, and volunteers encouraged ICT informally being early adopters of such technologies themselves. Here are a few examples of formal ICT projects:

- “[TEFL] Volunteers are also responding to the need for modern education materials by developing and procuring new materials, texts and **video and computer equipment**” (CBJ-FY 1996, emphasis mine);
- “**A teachers’ web site** has been designed for [TEFL] Volunteers and Bulgarian counterparts to collaborate and easily access teaching resources” (CBJ-FY 2005, emphasis mine);
- “...one [CED] Volunteer helped his community establish the first Bulgarian **virtual crafts shop** which boasts over 3,500 items and 26,000 hits in less than a year” (CBJ-FY 2005, emphasis mine);
- “[ENV] Volunteers assisted with modernization of tourism information centers, the creation of promotional materials and the development of a national adventure **tourism web site**” (CBJ-FY 2005, emphasis mine).

The local partners recognized the introduction of new technologies through the establishment of Internet networks and computer rooms or labs as a significant contribution by Peace Corps/Bulgaria:

The municipality, the second or their third year they wanted to build a computer network and they asked the Peace Corps: “Do you have someone with computer skills?” We actually did receive a computer volunteer. And that was a very significant benefit that I saw. (Peace Corps/Bulgaria Business Center/Municipality Partner, Interview)

The project was for the creation of a computer room. This may sound funny but in 2000 this was exotic. There were no computers in schools and even in the municipality there were fewer computers than what we had at the Municipal Youth Center that we received through this funding. This was a paradox for those times but also a great interest. (NGO Partner in Sredets and Burgas, Interview)

Unfortunately, the introduction of new technologies was not always coupled with the transfer of skills necessary to use the technology once the volunteer leaves: “... **the most tragic is that Brian I think brought a scanner but from laziness nobody went to learn how to use it and the machine is just sitting and no one can use it.**” (Nature Park Partner, Malko Tarnovo Focus Group, emphasis mine).

Altogether, ICT initiatives in development are important in view of the growing digital divide (Naderveen 2010; Drori 2010) as well as processes of generic globalization. In Bulgaria, PCVs helped bridge the digital divide by accelerating the global interconnectivity in the country by upgrading older computer classrooms, from Pravetz computers that Bulgaria produced during communism to new computers using the Windows system, and the creation of Internet network systems.

The **Women in Development/Gender and Development Initiative (WID/GAD)** concerned “...the advancement of women and the promotion of girls and women in the social and economic development of their countries” (Peace Corps 1999: 521). Similar to ICT, volunteers were encouraged to integrate girls and women in all of their projects. In Bulgaria, the

signature WID/GAD Initiative was the national Camp GLOW, which began in 1997.⁹⁴

WID/GAD was an initiative that the Bulgaria program staff was not entirely comfortable with because they felt that the program did not account for the specific gender context of a post-socialist country. This is an opinion shared by both male and female local Bulgaria staff:

Male perspective: the other side of development that Peace Corps brought was ...democracy building, inclusion of minorities, changing the attitude to minorities, **changing the attitude to women, although to me this...especially the attitude to women, to me ...they had brought a cliché from North America because this is an issue here.** In Bulgaria, we have always respected women. I don't say that there is no violence against women there but Bulgarians have always respected their mothers, their sisters, their wives. Women are allowed to vote as early as the end of the 19 century (The Tarnovo Constitution of 16.04.1879) and they enjoyed equal rights protection, employment, promotion opportunities and pay for at least the whole period of communist Bulgaria. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)

Female perspective: I remember that there was at a certain point a lot of ...focus on women's issues and empowering women and the way Peace Corps and we as an organization approached it didn't always ...**it wasn't always accepted well by the local people because in Bulgaria very often women think that we have all the rights, so ... it's not something that we need to fight of or at least not the way...**some volunteers tried to do this. **The way it developed in the states.** (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)

On the receiving end of WID/GAD activities, the purpose of Camp GLOW was perceived as a new way of thinking about problem-solving and active citizenship rather than as educational program about girls'/women's issues:

...actually as a camper this was my first real professional contact with different PCVs so by that time I believed that the idea of Peace Corps is to actually **help the Bulgarian society to learn how to help itself.** The idea was to present different good practices coming from outside the country, maybe good practices from the states, that have been tested in other countries around the world and that have actually had made real changes in the lives of the people. So I believed that this was the main idea of the whole organizations at least it was as it concerns our projects because this is exactly what the PCVs taught us. **They presented us the way how to work, how to set goals, how to actually realize them and how to look for innovative solutions to a communal problem**

⁹⁴ The first Camp GLOW was established in 1995 by Romania Volunteers and today there are more than 60 countries worldwide that organize GLOW camps. Source: Peace Corps Bulgaria. 2012. "Legacy Newsletter: Leadership and Tolerance Building Camps." *Peace Corps Bulgaria Legacy Newsletter*, Issue 2, Second Year, February 2012.

and solve them by different activities or small projects depending on the need and the resources that we have in those communities.[...] By being politically active we also stimulate the girls to think about how they can not only vote but try to go for political office if they believe that this is the right think about them because it Bulgaria there is still domination of men running for political offices especially at the local level. So we put an emphasis on all levels of active citizenship. (GLOW Association Representative, Interview, emphasis mine)

From this description of Camp GLOW it is clear that the camp is another example of the mixing of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal value and practices. The camp promoted the neoliberal value of self-sufficiency and the counter-neoliberal value of collective social empowerment through small projects (neoliberal governance practice), as well political activism (counter-neoliberal practice).

The **Anti-Trafficking in Persons (ATIP)** initiative aimed to fight human trafficking by (1) raising awareness and reducing stigma, (2) empowering individuals to recognize and avoid dangerous situations, and (3) supporting local volunteers, NGOs, and state agencies in the fight against human trafficking. In Bulgaria, activities under this initiative were coordinated by the ATIP committee.⁹⁵ It began in the 2000s with a focus on the Roma communities, who were the more likely victims of human trafficking. The volunteer approaches in promoting the integration of the Roma minority was another area that the program staff was more critical of:

*...also very controversial topic is the topic with minorities and Roma. You know how strongly Americans feel about tolerance and equality and ...equal treatment of all people... and in Bulgaria it was a topic that was controversial. **Actually I think that this was one of the program or initiatives or projects that... I won't say it didn't have impact because volunteers did a lot but they mainly worked with minority people.** There weren't a lot of successful examples of volunteering involving Bulgarians in these types of projects.* (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)

The concern was not that there was an effort to improve the condition of the Roma community but that the focus was exclusively on the Roma community, without attempts to

⁹⁵ Source: Peace Corps Bulgaria. n.d. "Prevention of Human Trafficking PPP", in Bulgarian. Part of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria legacy materials.

create opportunities for interaction between the Roma and Bulgarian communities that can support equalizing power dynamics. From my interviews with the local partners a successful strategy in that direction came when Peace Corps placed volunteers in mixed communities. In those cases, the volunteers did the work of promoting ethnic tolerance and understanding often through their own interaction with local minority groups:

School Partner: *...and she especially focused on environment, relationships between the children especially between different ethnic groups [VB: tolerance.] **although, here in this municipality we have lived for years different religions and ethnic groups....their presence had an impact because it didn't matter to them who was what. They didn't have this...we interact but to a certain point, after that there is a limit that we can't cross.** For example*

Municipality Partner: *...that is exactly right, no matter how tolerant.*

School Partner: *We are very close but...we don't do this like that. He is such as such. There is a limit but they don't see this limit. **This was beneficial to see how a person without those set limits interacts if this limit was gone.** And you realize that this limit is conditional and that is put...that in fact it doesn't exist and perhaps prevents you from.... This was very useful – how to interact with different religions and ethnic groups. Things that don't exist, community conventions that I don't know why they exist but they don't have those. They don't have this limit.* (Excerpt from Garmen Focus Group Transcript, emphasis mine)

In the above example, PCVs engendered development through their daily interactions. They served as an example of the behavior/attitude that they wanted to transfer to the local people.

The **HIV/AIDS Prevention Initiative** in Bulgaria started in 2008 under PEPFAR (The President Emergency Plan for Aids Relief) although volunteers from earlier years were also involved in HIV/AIDS prevention activities as part of their primary and/or secondary assignments. Peace Corps/Bulgaria managed three PEPFAR projects under a formal agreement with the Ministry of Health which were:

...between \$100,000 - \$150,000 each [...] for different trainings for different local people, for PCVs....also we created and distributed a lot of health education and HIV/AIDS prevention materials – books, leaflets and...about 50 PCVs developed HIV/AIDS prevention projects and there were a lot of summer camps [...]with the

purpose of educating Bulgarian youth and not only youth on the benefits of healthy lifestyle of ...the risks of tobacco smoking or drug use or promiscuity or different risky lifestyles and behaviors. (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview, emphasis mine)

As an example of a lifestyles program, the HIV/AIDS Prevention Initiative fits within the neoliberal practices that work through individual social empowerment. In the Peace Corps' *Teach English Prevent HIV: a Teacher's Manual* there is also a lesson on the prevention of stigma and discrimination against people with HIV/AIDS. In the latter sense one of the goals of the initiative was to promote the expansion of social rights for this group, which is a counter-neoliberal mechanism.

The **Volunteerism and Service Learning** (V2) Initiative was launched in 2008 to support host country volunteerism overseas. As part of the initiative Peace Corps created a *Volunteerism Action Guide* designed to help volunteers and their partners develop service learning projects in their local communities to add value to Peace Corps' participatory community development approach. Specifically:

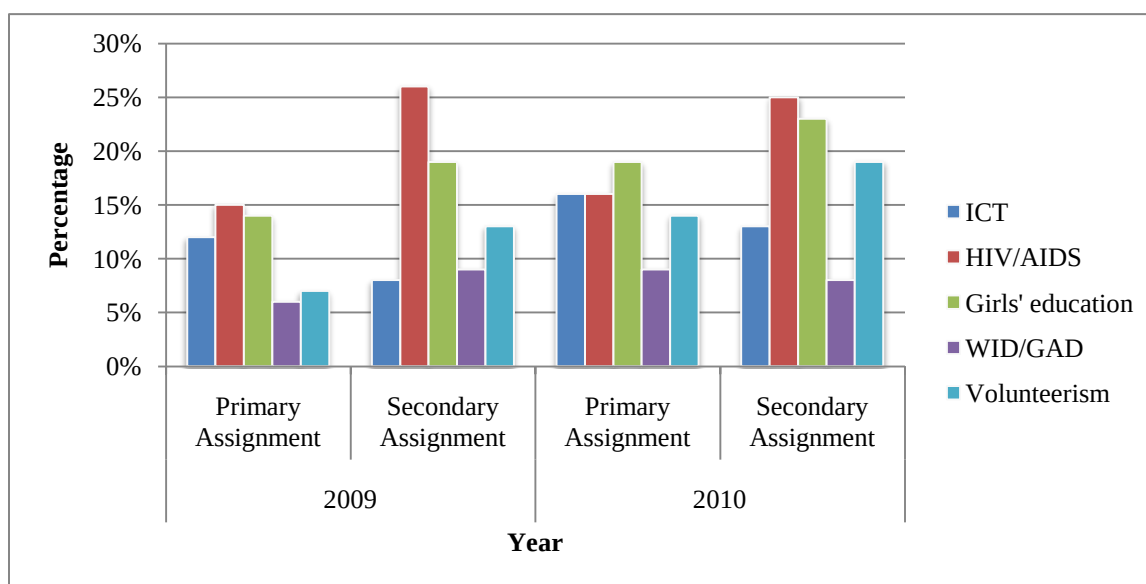
Service learning as a tool to help youth build stronger academic skills, **foster civic responsibility**, and develop leadership and other life skills. This is accomplished by combining service activities with structured opportunities that link the tasks to **self-reflection**, self-discovery, and the acquisition and comprehension of values, skills, and content knowledge. (Peace Corps n.d.:2)

The task of self-reflection places this initiative in the group of mechanisms for counter-neoliberalization through voluntarism because: "It prompts participants to **think deeply about complex community problems and alternative solutions**. It also encourages participants to **examine their preconceptions and assumptions** in order to explore and **understand their roles and responsibilities as active citizens**" (Peace Corps n.d.:3). Both complex views of

development and critical active citizenship are characteristics of a counter-neoliberal subjectivity. However, while this model should support the formation of counter-neoliberal subjectivity, my research findings cannot support or challenge whether the actual implementation of volunteer activities followed this model (whether the volunteers incorporated the task of self-reflection in their activities or not).

Data from the 2009 and 2010 *Annual Volunteer Surveys* for Peace Corps/Bulgaria suggest that between six and 19% of the volunteers participated in agency-wide initiatives as part of their primary assignments, while between eight and 26% participated as part of their secondary assignments (see Figure 48). More volunteers were involved in the HIV/AIDS Initiative, followed by Girls Education, ICT, Volunteerism and WID/GAD.

Figure 48: Percentage of Volunteers Involved in Agency-Wide Initiatives by Type of Assignment in Select Years



Sources: Peace Corps 2009 Annual Volunteer Survey: Bulgaria (n= 107); Peace Corps 2010 Annual Volunteer Survey: Bulgaria (n= 88).

External Resources

The resources that Bulgaria volunteers had access to included: the Small Project Assistance (SPA) program, the Peace Corps Partnership Program (PCPP), and the Coverdell World Wise Schools (WWS) program. The SPA program (1993 – 2010) and the PCPP (1991 – 2013) offered limited financial assistance for volunteer projects. Both programs were competitive and required the submission of a project proposal by the volunteer aimed at “...facilitate[ing] the development and implementation of sustainable grassroots small grant projects that build capacity in communities where volunteers serve.”⁹⁶ They differed in their funding sources.

SPA funds were available as direct grants to volunteers on a competitive basis. In the 1998-2001 period, on average, 22% of TEFL volunteers, 17% of CED volunteers, and 40% of ENV volunteers utilized SPA as a resource (Peace Corps Bulgaria 2002). The type of funded activities included: resource and information center development (42 projects), environmental education and awareness (27 projects), children/youth camps (six projects); biodiversity conservation activities (four projects) and Empowerment Activities (three projects). Compared to other SPA programs in Eastern Europe, “*Most of ours were educational activities. [...] we are working with people trying to build their ...viewpoint*” (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview).

The **PCPP** allowed volunteers to seek financial support from donors within the U.S. and around the world for projects with a minimum of 25% local contribution (Peace Corps 1999). Approved projects were posted by Peace Corps in a “Donate to Volunteer Projects” database on

⁹⁶ Source: Peace Corps Knowledge Hub. 2016. “Small Grants Program.” Retrieved August 2, 2016 (<https://pclive.peacecorps.gov/pclive/index.php/small-grants-program>)

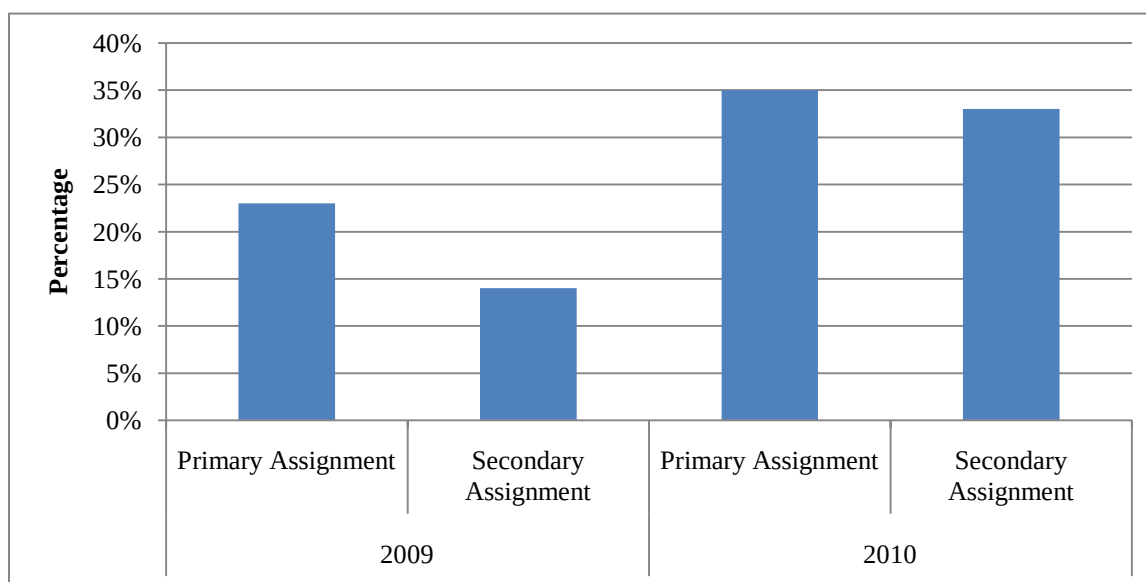
the official Peace Corps' website, which served as a fundraising tool for prospective donors. Both the SPA and PCPP programs exemplify neoliberal governance practices.

The **WWS Program** is an education program that connects students from Peace Corps countries with students in the U.S. It is designed to support activities under Peace Corps' Goal 3 (To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans). Connections were made through the establishment of overseas letter correspondence exchanges, as well as through e-mail and/or online video exchanges. TEFL volunteers and those placed with schools were most likely to participate in the program. In the 2009 and 2010 *Annual Volunteer Surveys* for Peace Corps/Bulgaria, 14 to 35 % of the volunteers reported involvement in the program as part of their primary or secondary activities (see Figure 49). Below is a recollection from a local partner on the benefit of this program:

*I remember that through another volunteer we were included in another network and **we still maintain contacts with a school in Charlotte, NC and many years ago we established a conference call. Today these calls are an everyday thing but then** we were very proud with this because our students are young and our colleagues from the US said that their children were very surprised that the Bulgarian kids look like them. They must have expected a different country or continent. Many positive emotions. (School Partner, Burgas Focus Group, emphasis mine)*

In contrast to the SPA and PCPP programs, which represent neoliberal governance practices, the WWS program supported counter-neoliberal subjectivity. It served as a platform for two-way interaction between children from Bulgaria and the U.S.

Figure 49: Percentage of Volunteers Involved in World Wise School/Correspondence Match Activities by Type of Assignment in Select Years



Sources: Peace Corps 2009 Annual Volunteer Survey: Bulgaria (n= 107); Peace Corps 2010 Annual Volunteer Survey: Bulgaria (n= 88).

BEST PRACTICES

When the decision to close the program in Bulgaria was made, Peace Corps decided to transition out of the country in two years rather than to pull out immediately. This allowed the local staff to develop and implement a comprehensive two-year legacy plan “...to honor the impact and commitment of Peace Corps volunteers, Peace Corps/Bulgaria staff, and Bulgarian partners” (PC/B Legacy Book n.d.:3). The plan entailed the identification, promotion, and institutionalization of successful programs and tools created by volunteers and their local counterparts, preserving and promoting the personal legacy of volunteers, and celebrating the legacy of the post through press events and a big event in 2012. Table 23 includes a summary of all legacy programs and tools, as well as the legacy organizations that are associated with some of them.

Table 23: Peace Corps/Bulgaria Legacy Programs, Tools, and Partners

Topic	Programs & Tools	Legacy Partners
<i>Sector Projects</i>		
TEFL: Teacher Development	Teacher Toolbox; TEFL Planner; <u>Spelling Bee competition</u> ; <u>Creative Writing contest</u>	Teach for Bulgaria The CORPluS Foundation
YD: Special Education	Special education materials	
<i>Agency-Wide Initiatives/Secondary projects</i>		
Camps and Extracurricular Activities	Camp in a Box; <u>Multiethnic/Roma Camp</u> ; <u>Leadership Academy GLOW (for girls)</u> ; Camp TOBE (for boys)	The Areté Youth Foundation The GLOW Association
Life Skills	Life Skills manual; Anti- Trafficking-in-Persons toolkit	
Health Education	HIV/AIDS materials	
Voluntarism	V2 Handbook Volunteer Handbook Programming and Training Guidance	
<i>Internal Language & Training Resources</i>		
Project Design and Management (PDM)	PDM Handbook and session plans	The CORPluS Foundation
Bulgarian Language	Pre-service and in-service training language materials	Bulgarian Red Cross, Refugee-Migrants Service
Community Skills	Pre-service and in-service training cross-cultural materials	Bulgarian Red Cross, Refugee-Migrants Service

Legacy Programs and Tools

The legacy programs and tools included three types of resources: (1) educational resources for youth, (2) training and management resources for volunteers and community organizers, and (3) language and cultural training resources for foreigners. Together they represent the legacies of the volunteers from the Education and Youth Development projects and of the Peace Corps staff (the language, cultural, and technical training resources that were developed to train the volunteers). What is striking is that the legacies of the Small-Business Development and Community Economic Development programs are missing. Few legacies of

the Environment program – environmental activities - are included in the “Camp in the Box” toolkit under Camps and Extracurricular Activities.

Legacy Partners

From the legacy partners that are mentioned in the PC/B Legacy Book, Teach for Bulgaria and the Bulgarian Red Cross, were passive partners to the extent that they were identified as volunteer organizations that were most likely to benefit from certain legacy tools. Peace Corps shared those tools by placing PCR volunteers with the organizations and during special meetings and workshops. It is not clear to what extent these organizations have adopted any of the tools.

The GLOW Association, the Areté Youth Foundation, and the CORPluS Foundation, however, were all active legacy partners that took over a specific legacy program before or in conjunction with the closure of the program. The **GLOW Association** was established in 2004 by former participants in Camp GLOW (Girls Leading Our World) to continue the initiative started by former volunteers in 2010. This is a small all-volunteer organization that works in close cooperation with the European Information Center in Veliko Tarnovo, a former volunteer host organization. They take much pride in being “...*really a legacy organization [because] we are an organization that started in order to keep the idea of Peace Corps and was started by the people who were inspired*” (GLOW Association Representative, Interview).

The **Areté Youth Foundation** was established in the U.S. in 2005 by former volunteers to provide funding for the Zaedno Napred (Moving Forward) camps for Roma youth and for the GLOW camps. The Zaedno Napred camps started in 2001 and until 2010 were organized in partnership between volunteers and different local nonprofits. Then, in 2010, the Areté Youth

Foundation-Bulgaria was registered to take over the camps, as well as to offer other programs – Education Hub and Professional Network, and Roma Girls Camps since 2014 - aiming to support high-potential Roma youth. Some former local Peace Corps staff members have joined Areté's team. The current activities of the Areté Youth Foundation continue to reflect the concerns of the Bulgarian program staff that the volunteer activities in this area focus exclusively on the Roma communities and thus do not allow opportunities for interaction between the Roma and the Bulgarian communities that can enable improved relationships between the two groups. For example, there is evidence that equal-status contact, like that between soldiers, prisoners, and summer campers, especially in the context of cooperative learning, can reduce prejudice (Myers 2010).

The **CORPluS Foundation** was established in 2012 by former local staff members “to advance the work and goals established by Peace Corps/Bulgaria.”⁹⁷ It took over the organizations of the Spelling Bee competition and the Bulgarian Creative Writing Contest (under Teacher Development), which are neutral to neoliberal and counter-neoliberal processes although they exemplify the neoliberal value of competition. The leadership of the foundation also envisions utilizing the Peace Corps' PDM approach to community development by creating a Small Community Projects Program in the future which is a neoliberal governance mechanism. The establishment of a Peace Corps legacy organization by the staff once again underscores the importance of the local Bulgarian staff in creating a successful Peace Corps presence in a country.

⁹⁷ Source: CORPluS Foundation. 2015. “About CORPluS.” Retrieved August 12, 2015 (<http://corplus.org/about-corplus>)

Missing Legacies

Peace Corps/Bulgaria's records include mentions of the following programs, tools, and partners that did not make it into the legacy plan and celebrations. The main legacies of the SBD project were the **Bulgarian-American Business Centers** established by Peace Corps through Project Enterprise. While the ownership of the centers was transferred to other organizations many of them continue to exist today and some – like the Agency for Regional Development and Business Center in Vidin – acknowledge that they are “the successor of the Bulgarian-American Business Center, established in 1993 on a joint project of Vidin Municipality and the Peace Corps of the United States.”⁹⁸ Many of the organizations that took over the Business Centers helped establish the **Bulgarian Association of Regional Development Agencies and Business Centers** (BARDA) in 1997, which is an indirect legacy of the SBD project:

The network of Business Centers that we transferred to local entities later actually served as the backbone of a currently operating NGO – BARDA – this is the Bulgarian Association of Regional Development Agencies [...], even the first executive director of BARDA, I believe, Petya Atsenova, used to be a Peace Corps counterpart in the Stara Zagora business centre, so this is what I would wish many volunteers could see because they kept talking that we had to work on establishing NGOs....but they didn't acknowledge the fact that you cannot wish and have this done overnight. It all takes a lot of planning and a lot of preliminary groundwork. I was really surprised to see that right now BARDA covers like 25-30 cities. This to me is something very positive, of course, it is not only due to Peace Corps but Peace Corps took part in setting it up. (BG Program Manager, Interview)

A clear case of a SBD legacy organization is **Junior Achievement (JA)/Bulgaria**, which was established in 1995 with the help of B5 SBD Volunteer William Ludwig, who served on its first board of directors. Peace Corps/Bulgaria also provided organizational support for Junior Achievement by entering into a joint partnership with the Ministry of Education to launch the program with 10 PCVs who were the first to teach JA programs in Bulgarian schools in the

⁹⁸ Source: Agency for Regional Development and Business Center - Vidin. 2015. “History.” Retrieved October 19, 2015 (<http://www.bcvidin.org/en/2-1.html>).

1996/1997 academic year.⁹⁹ Research on JA places this program as an example of global neoliberal curriculum understood as “...neo-liberalism ‘in’ the curriculum, particularly in the guise of ‘enterprise’ as a means of disseminating, naturalizing, and instilling a neo-liberal ontology. That is the making up of students (and teachers) as entrepreneurial subjects” (Ball 2009: 485). In 2015 JA/Bulgaria reports working with more than 2,000 teachers and in more than 1,100 educational institutions in more than 450 locations.¹⁰⁰ Given the success of the JA/Bulgaria program one of the surprising findings of this research was that the organization was not recognized as one of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria legacy organizations, nor was it part of the 2012 Legacy Celebrations.

Former SBD staff member mentioned that the **Business Plan Workbook** that was used in the Peace Corps Business Centers in the 1990s was still a useful tool:

I just wanted to say something which may be funny but the workbook on how to write a business plan is still on my desk at home and I am really helping with this book because I recently helped write a business plan to a person, to a relative. (BG Program Assistant, Interview)

The Environmental project prided itself on supporting the establishment of the network of municipal environmental specialists – the **Bulgarian Association of Municipal Environmental Experts (BAMEE)** - which is still active. ENV Volunteers also created environmental curriculum tools such as *School Recycling Programs: a Manual for Educators* and *Environmental Source Notebook*.

A different kind of a Peace Corps/Bulgaria legacy that emerged after the closure of Peace Corps is **Step to Bulgaria**, a private company established by a former program staff member to teach Bulgarian language and culture to foreigners in Bulgaria using Peace Corps tools.

⁹⁹ Junior Achievement Bulgaria. 2015. “History.” Retrieved October 29, 2015 (http://www.jabulgaria.org/page/about_us/history)

¹⁰⁰ Junior Achievement Bulgaria. 2015. “About Us.” Retrieved October 29, 2015 (http://www.jabulgaria.org/page/about_us).

*You know after my Peace Corps experience it was such a shock to go to a Bulgarian institution to work I couldn't and that is now I am private business and I am developing experiences and skills that I learned in Peace Corps. I **am such a legacy of Peace Corps because my Step to Bulgaria is all things that I did at PST I try to do now with people who are for one or another reason in Bulgaria.*** (BG Program & Training Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine).

Many of those foreign students are European Voluntary Service (EVS) volunteers. In this sense, the public availability of Peace Corps' training resources continues to support international development volunteering in Bulgaria and especially their cultural integration.

CONCLUSION

The examination of the goals and activities of Peace Corps/Bulgaria shows that all sector projects incorporated both neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms, albeit to different degrees. The goals of the Education project utilized human development approaches to social transformation through English Teaching that supported mostly counter-neoliberal practices.

The goals of the Small Business Development project were explicitly supportive of the neoliberal policies of liberalization, the implementation of privatization, and the introduction of neoliberal governance practices. While volunteer activities exemplified mostly neoliberal practices, there is evidence that some practices were of mixed character, such as working with both private firms and agricultural cooperatives. When the project transformed into CED the volunteers continued to engage in neoliberal practices, but by the early 2000s the language changed from working with clients to working with citizens.

The Environment project was the most explicitly supportive of counter-neoliberal practices around the promotion of environmentalism as well as the values of cooperation and collective social empowerment. However, there is also evidence that some volunteers were also involved in neoliberal practices where nature was used instrumentally such as ecotourism.

The Youth Development project was characterized by the parallel use of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms for social transformation as well the combination of counter-neoliberal values with neoliberal practices. The main neoliberal mechanism was the direct and indirect involvement of volunteers in the implementation of welfare privatization. The key counter-neoliberal practice was the support for the anti-trafficking initiative in the country.

Altogether, the main paradox is that the most explicitly neoliberal Small-Business Development/Community Economic Development and counter-neoliberal Environment projects were merged into one program. The decision was driven in large part by consideration of the changing profile of the volunteers – younger and less experienced – which speaks to an important dimension in the development process. That the construction of development needs is a two-way process that involves the matching of identified country needs with the available development resources.

In contrast to the sector projects, most of the Peace Corps agency-wide initiatives were aligned with counter-neoliberal values, although it is possible that the realization of those initiatives involved neoliberal governance practices. The logic of the funding resource programs (SPA and PCPP) was reverse. They represented neoliberal governance practices that could be utilized towards the achievement of counter-neoliberal initiatives. The school exchange program (WWS) enabled the formation of counter-neoliberal subjectivities.

Finally, when the program closed, the best practices of the organization were celebrated through the compilation and dissemination of legacy tools and programs, except that the best practices of the SBD, CED and ENV projects were excluded from the list of legacy tools and programs. SBD and ENV legacy organizations were also missing from the legacy celebration event. The latter can be seen as an attempt at the re-writing of the history of Peace Corps or

simply as a reflection of the status of Peace Corps at the time when the program closed. Table 24 summarizes the evidence of neoliberal, mixed, counter-neoliberal and generic (neutral) mechanisms from the analyses of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria's activities.

Table 24: Neoliberal, Mixed, Counter-Neoliberal, and Neutral Mechanisms in the Activities

Activity	Neoliberal	Mixed	Counter-Neoliberal	Generic
TEFL				
• goals	X	X		X
• activities	XX	X	XXXXXX	
SBD				
• goals	XX	X	X	XX
• activities	XX	XX		
CED				
• goals		X	X	X
• activities	XXXX		X	
ENV				
• goals	X		XX	
• activities	X		XXXXXX	
YD				
• goals	X		X	X
• activities	X	X	X	
COD				
• goals	X		X	X
• activities		X		
PCR	X			
Agency-Wide Initiatives		HIV/AIDS	ATIP, WID/GAD, V2	ICT
External Resources	SPA, PCPP		WSS	
Legacy Tools		PDM		
Legacy Organizations		CORPluS Foundation	Areté Youth Foundation, GLOW Association	
Missing Legacies	BARDA JA/Bulgaria		BAMEE	Step to Bulgaria

CHAPTER 9: PEACE CORPS SUBJECTIVITY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter investigates competing notions about the type of development that was practiced by Peace Corps/Bulgaria. I compare and contrast opinions by the local staff, volunteers, and their local partners about whether or not Peace Corps/Bulgaria promoted neoliberal development through unprompted articulations of the Peace Corps development model. I use data from the following open-ended questions:” What kind of development was promoted by the Peace Corps program?”, “In your opinion, what are the strengths and weakness of the Peace Corps development model compared to other development programs?” and “How do you think your experience working for Peace Corps has shaped your understanding of international development?”.

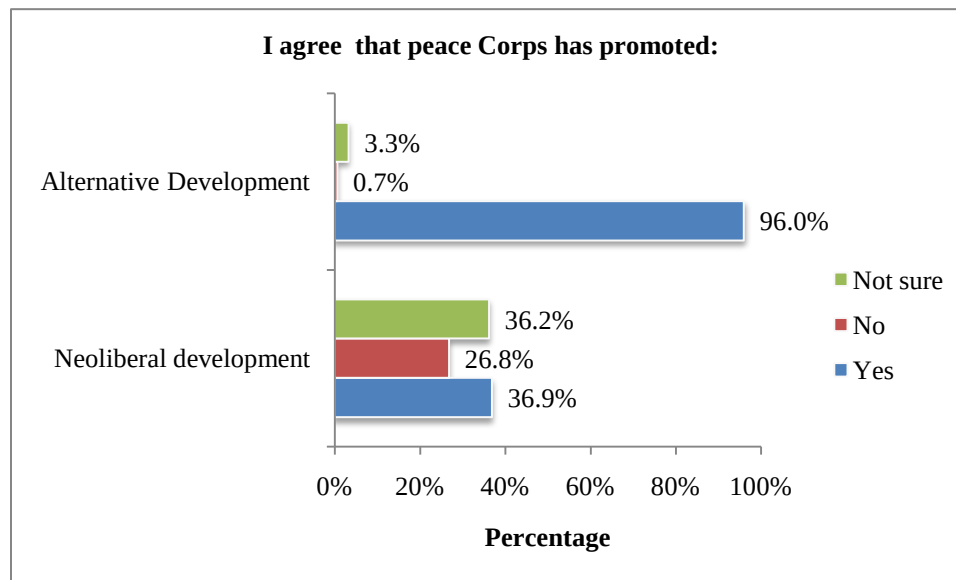
ON NEOLIBERAL DEVELOPMENT

Volunteer Perceptions

In the Volunteer Subscribe Survey, I asked research participants directly, if they “agree that Peace Corps/Bulgaria has promoted neoliberal development (focus on economic growth through market driven approaches including privatization, liberalization, deregulation, etc.).” I also asked directly if they “agree that Peace Corps/Bulgaria has promoted alternative development (focus on social and community well being through people-centered approaches to development including minority empowerment & participation, human development, sustainability, etc.).” Volunteers overwhelmingly agreed that Peace Corps promoted alternative development (95.9%) but were divided on whether Peace Corps promoted neoliberal

development (36.9% agreed that it did, 26.9% disagreed that it did, and 36.2% chose the “Not sure” option (See Figure 50). The smaller share of “Yes” answers suggests that neoliberal development was perceived as a marginal rather than the dominant development approach.

Figure 50: Volunteer Perceptions on Alternative and Neoliberal Development, n=151



Volunteers thought that this approach was limited to the activities of the business development program, the early 1992 – 1995 period, and to the activities of specific host organizations/communities and volunteers. There clearly was some level of understanding of what was involved in neoliberal development (what kind of activities constitute neoliberal development), when those activities took place, and who was involved in those (who were the agents of neoliberal development), as well as whether the promotion of neoliberal development was associated with positive or negative normative evaluations.

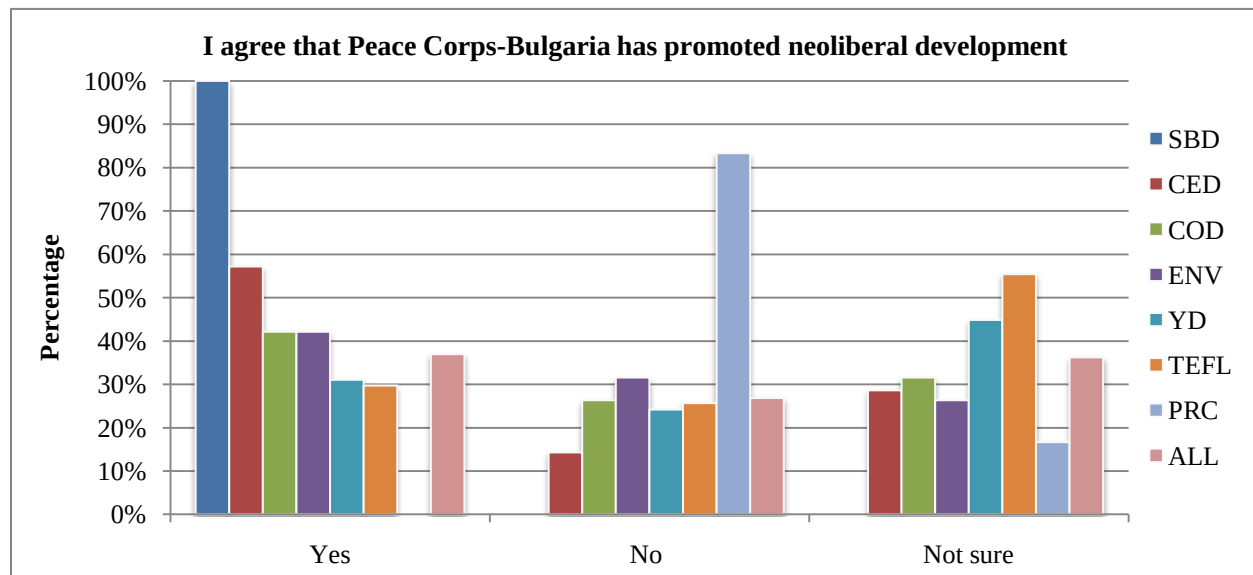
Two volunteers considered their project sector when answering the question including one YD volunteer who answered “No” and one TEFL volunteer who chose to skip answering the question altogether:

No Answer: *I was not involved in the business development unit, I was a youth development volunteer. I can't say that my practices within Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development...* (B14 YD Volunteer, Subscribe Survey, emphasis mine);

Skipped: *My experience was limited to education; I didn't experience promotion of any particular economic model*” (B12 TEFL Volunteer, Subscribe Survey, emphasis mine).

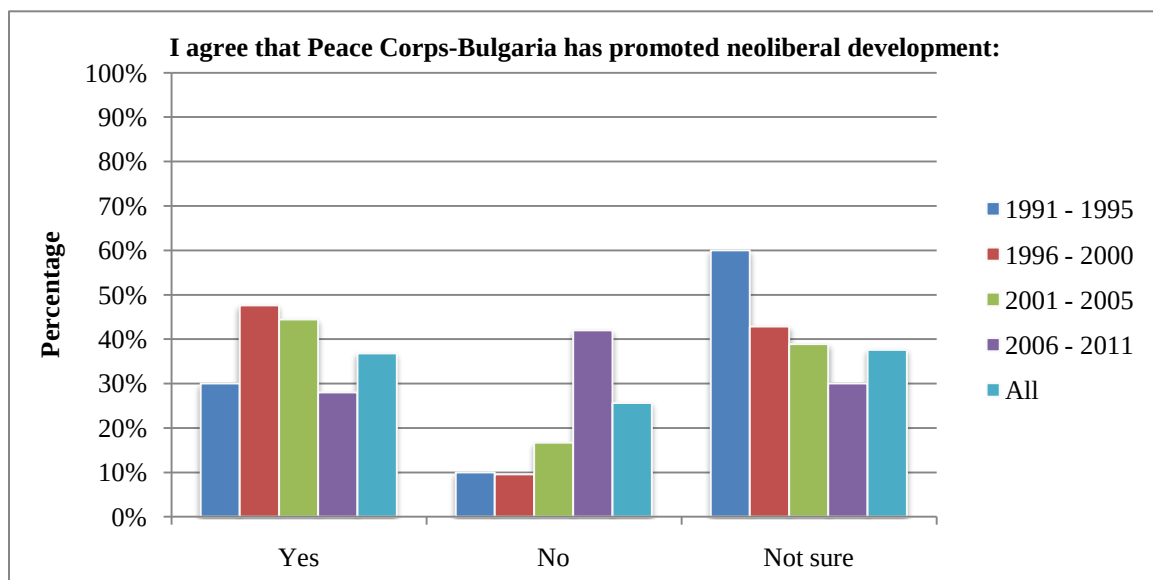
The distribution of volunteer answers by project affiliation in Figure 51 does not indicate strong associations. Still, volunteers from programs with more explicit economic-oriented programming were more likely to agree that Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development. All SBD volunteers and the majority of CED volunteers (61.5%) agreed that Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development, followed by volunteers from the COD (42.2%), ENV (40%), YD (31%), and the TEFL projects (30.1%). None of the six PCR volunteers agreed with the statement. YD and TEFL volunteers were both more likely to choose the “Not sure” option.

Figure 51: Volunteer Perceptions of Neoliberal Development by Sector Project, n=148



To see if volunteers agreed that the focus on neoliberal development was limited to the early years, I looked at the volunteer perceptions by their group. Given the small sample and large number of groups, I combined groups into four cohorts of volunteers who arrived in the following time periods: 1991 – 1995 (B1 through B5 groups), 1996 – 2000 (B6 through B10 groups), 2001 – 2005 (B11 through B18 groups), and 2006 – 2011 (B19 through B27 groups). The data in Figure 52, shows that volunteers who arrived and served in the late 90s (47.5%) and early 2000s (44.4%) were more likely to agree that Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development compared to the early 90s (30%) and late 2000s (28%). This is surprising because, overall, Peace Corps programming from the first years when the SBD project (1992-1996) was operating was more explicitly aligned with neoliberal development practices compared to later years. Still, the middle years were the time when the CED project was active (1997 – 2003) and when the IMF/World Bank Structural Adjustment Reforms were implemented.

Figure 52: Volunteer Perceptions of Neoliberal Development by Year of Arrival, n=117



The distributions of “No” and “Not sure” answers show that volunteers from later groups (and who finished their service more recently) were more likely to disagree with the statement (especially the most recent volunteers) and in general were less uncertain about how to answer the question. Therefore “time distance” - the amount of time between the end of Peace Corps service and participation in this dissertation research - affected volunteer perceptions on neoliberal development. Indeed, a volunteer who acknowledged involvement in the promotion of neoliberal development (the Junior Achievement Program) but chose to skip the question explained that: “[i]t was not until after Peace Corps that I really understood neoliberal economic principles” (YD Volunteer, Subscribe Survey). The latter highlights a very important consideration in the interpretation of the results: that the involvement in neoliberal activities was not necessarily a conscious act. Also if, volunteers recognized that certain Peace Corps/Bulgaria activities enabled processes of neoliberalization during or after their Peace Corps service (or not at all), then they might have underreporting the extent to which Peace Corps/Bulgaria was involved in the promotion of neoliberal development.

The underreporting of neoliberal development activities is related to the question of agency and whether or not volunteers based their answers on how they assessed their own volunteer work or the activities of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program in general (which includes theirs and other volunteers’ work). The latter distinction highlights the difference between individual and organizational attribution of neoliberal agency. It is also an example of a normative negative evaluation of neoliberal development:

I can’t say that my practices within Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development but I don’t feel that I can comment on the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program more broadly.... that would be part of the broader goals of Peace Corps/Bulgaria and not necessarily something that the average volunteer would appreciate or identify. (B14 YD Volunteer, Subscribe Survey)

Another volunteer who agreed that Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development noted that: “[i]n some cases yes, in some cases no. I think it really depends on the specific host community/organization and the volunteer” (B18 YD Volunteer, Subscribe Survey). The latter places the decision-making power at the local level and suggests that Peace Corps/Bulgaria had little effect on the types of activities that the volunteers and their host organization/community chose to pursue.

As shown in Figure 53, volunteers who served in the country for more than two years, were less likely to agree that Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development (34.4%) compared to those who served a regular two year term (40.2%). Thus, length of service (or the Peace Corps experience) does not correlate with increased belief that Peace Corps was involved in neoliberal development.

In contrast, volunteers with post-Peace Corps experience in the professional development sector were more likely to agree that Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development (41.5%), compared to those who didn’t (35%) (see Figure 54). While both volunteers with longer Peace Corps service and professional development experience were less likely chose the “Not sure” option. More development experience then helps the formation of an opinion, although not necessarily in the same direction. Interestingly, volunteers with Peace Corps staff experience were more likely to choose the “Not Sure” option (50%), compared to those without Peace Corps staff experience (see Figure 55).

Figure 53: Volunteer Perceptions on Neoliberal Development by Length of Service, n= 146

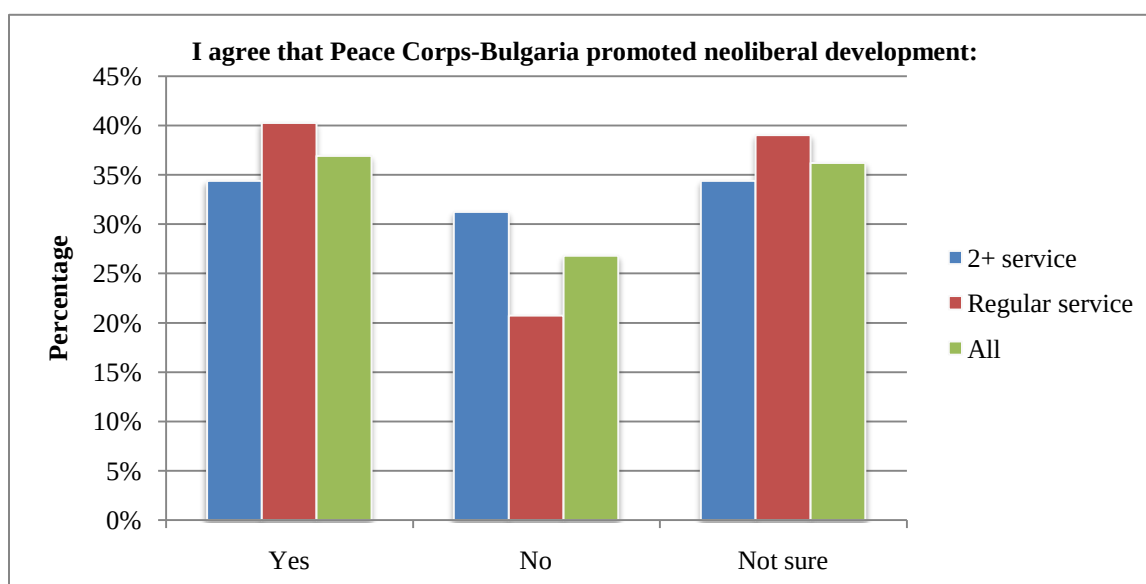
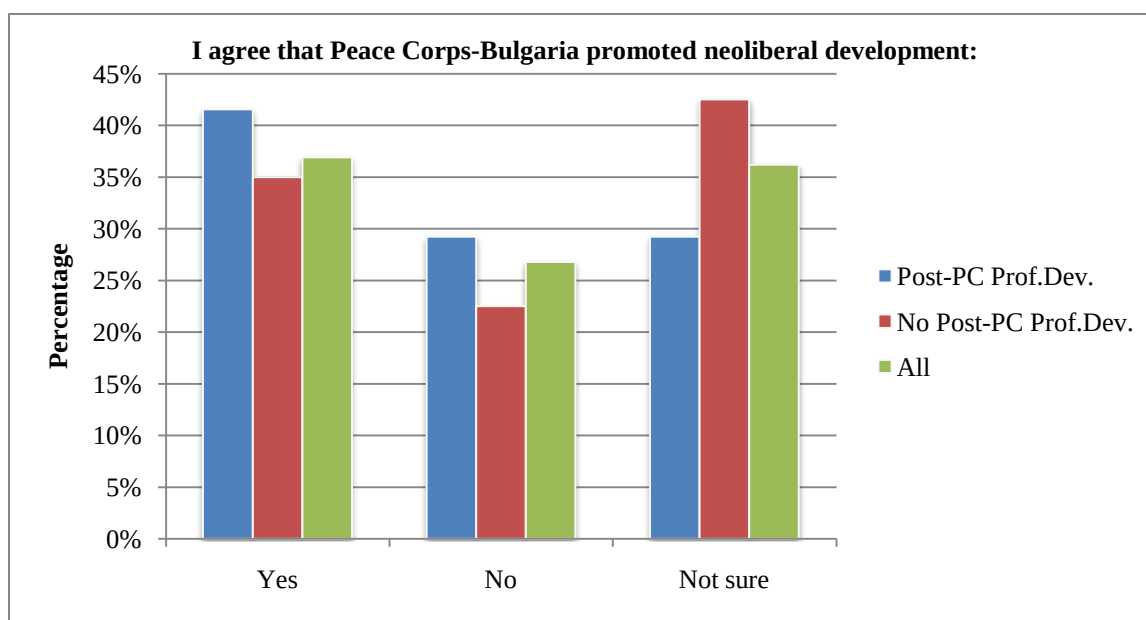
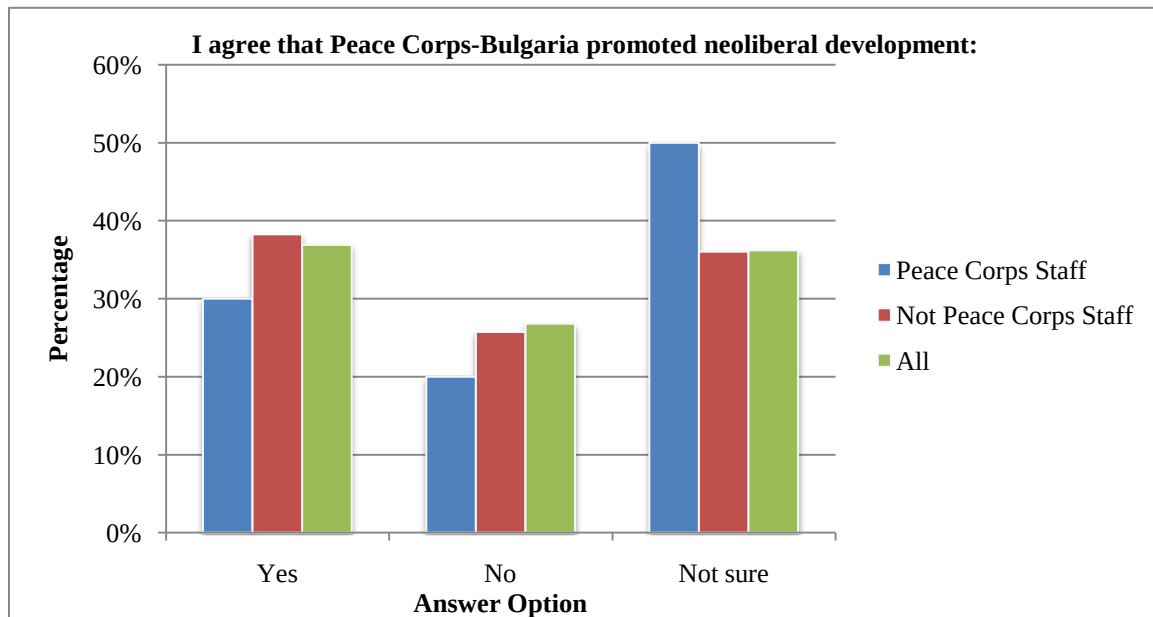


Figure 54: Volunteer Perceptions on Neoliberal Development by Prof. Dev. Experience, n= 145



Note: Post-PC Prof. Dev = professional development career after completion of Peace Corps service.

Figure 55: Volunteer Perceptions on Neoliberal Development by Staff Experience, n= 146

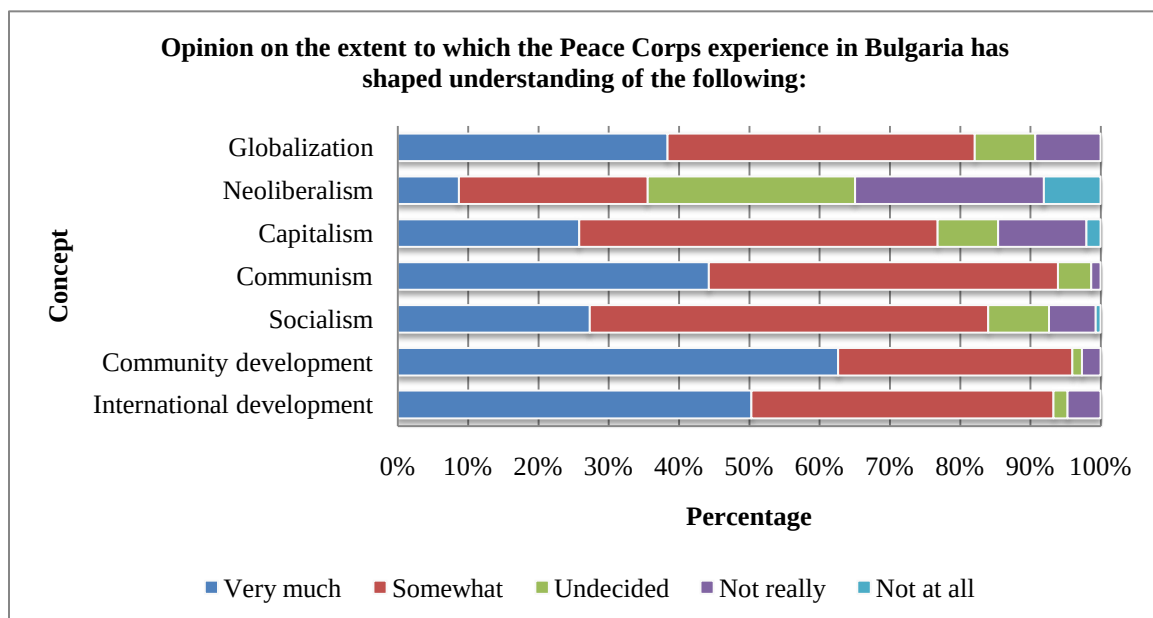


Note: Staff Experience = experience as a Peace Corps employee.

Volunteers' responses to questions on the extent to which they believed that their Peace Corps experience had shaped their understanding of development related concepts are related to issues of awareness. Volunteers felt that their awareness of neoliberalism was shaped by their Peace Corps experience to a small extent with only 8.7% of the volunteers answered "Very much", whereas 26.8% answered "Not really" and another 8.1% chose "Not at all" (see Figure 56). Neoliberalism was also the concept with the largest share of "Undecided" answers (29.5%). The latter along with the large share of "Not sure" responses to Question 3 (36.2% of the volunteers) indicates that "neoliberalism" was not a concept that most volunteers were familiar with. After all, "neoliberal" was not part of the official Peace Corps development rhetoric, nor was it part of the local staff vocabulary. As one staff member explained "*I think that all the activities of the PCVs were in that direction, although we were not specifically calling them neoliberal*" (BG Program Assistant, Interview).

In fact, it is possible that for some volunteers the survey itself introduced the very notion that Peace Corps could be involved in neoliberal development and resulted in the formation of an opinion on the matter for the first time. Most volunteers, however, believed that their Peace Corps experience had shaped significantly their understanding of community and international development. This is important because certain concepts of development are an expression of a neoliberal rather than counter-neoliberal subjectivity. I discuss this below in more detail when I specifically focus on the impact of Peace Corps service on the volunteers.

Figure 56: Volunteer Perceptions on the Impact of their Peace Corps Experience and their Conceptual Understanding, n= 151



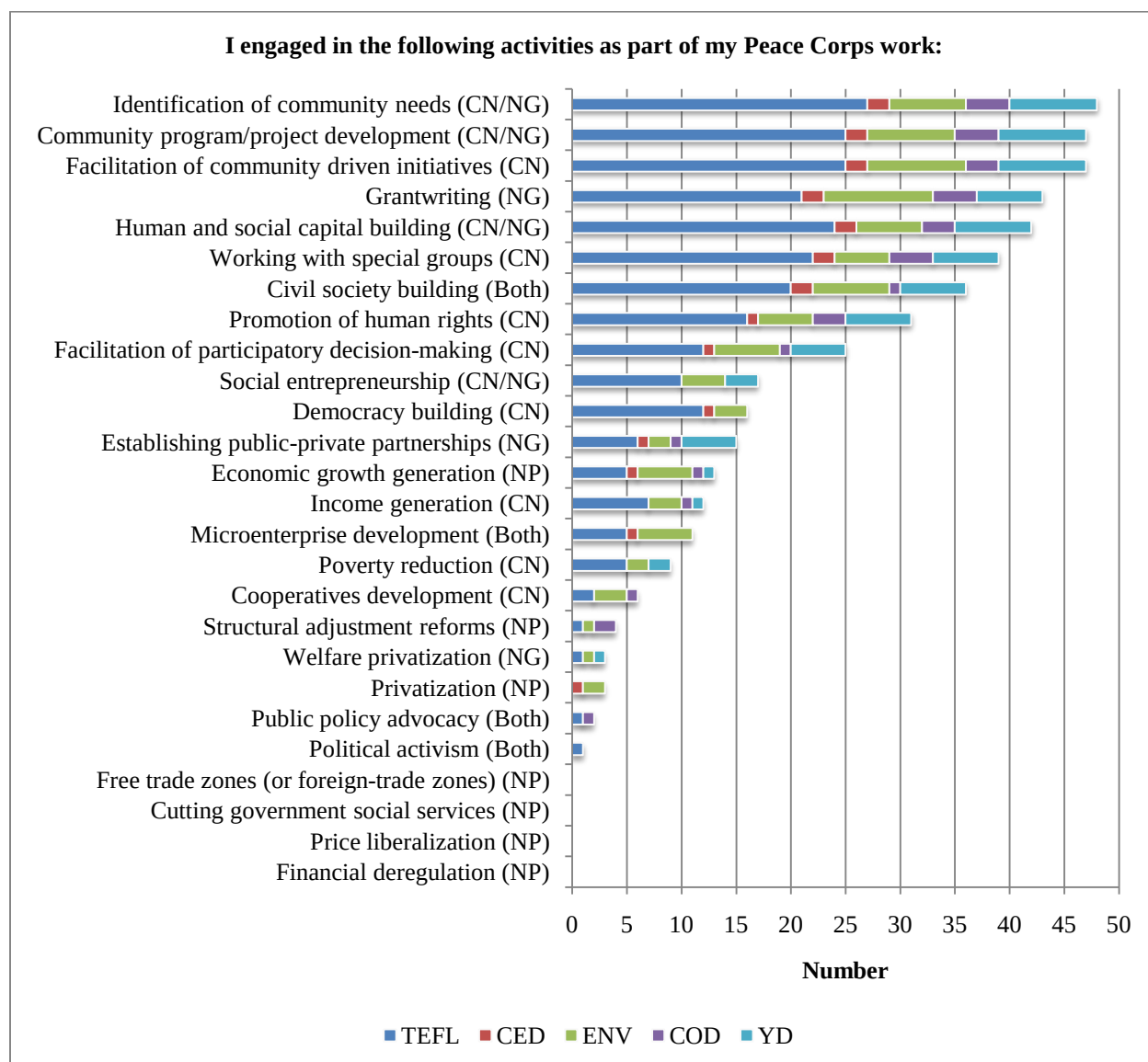
In addition to the promotion of particular economic models and principles, volunteers gave the following examples of neoliberal development: the Junior Achievement program,¹⁰¹ “grant development and community strengthening,” and “being courteous, and curious.”

¹⁰¹ A CED volunteer played a major role in the establishment of the Junior Achievement program in Bulgaria in 1997 and volunteers from all sectors taught Junior Achievement.

Interestingly none of these examples fit the definition of neoliberal development implicit in the question – development that focuses on economic growth through market driven approaches including privatization, liberalization, deregulation, etc - which highlights the conception of neoliberalism as neoliberal policies. Both Junior Achievement and grant development illustrate neoliberalism as a form of governance. “Community strengthening” concerns the debates about the neoliberal cooptation of community development. Finally, the notion that “*Peace Corps volunteers indirectly promoted neoliberal development, by being courteous and curious*” (B8 ENV Volunteer, Subscribe Survey), does not fit any of the competing definitions of neoliberalism but it implies that neoliberal development is understood as a type of development that promotes certain types of attitudes or subjectivity.

In the follow-up survey volunteers were asked if they engaged in specific activities as part of their Peace Corps work (see Figure 57). The list included activities associated with both neoliberal and counter-neoliberal practices. More volunteers acknowledged involvement in mixed counter-neoliberal/neoliberal governance practices (CN/NG) than strictly counter-neoliberal (CN) or neoliberal governance (NG) practices alone, and very few volunteers checked the neoliberal policies (NP) option. More importantly, volunteers from all sector projects reported engagement in neoliberal policies and governance practices. Thus, both the data on the perceptions of volunteers and their actual practices confirms that the involvement of Peace Corps/Bulgaria in neoliberal development was not limited to the SBD/CED projects or volunteers.

Figure 57: Number of Volunteers by Type of Peace Corps Activity and Sector Project, n=56



Many volunteers also used the language of project management to describe their activities. For example, they described their development work as projects with measurable objectives, outcomes, inputs, and tangible results. They were also helping by “walking people through a grant making process.” Some volunteers also utilized a cost-benefit analysis to support their reasoning for what they considered strengths of Peace Corps’ development approach:

Certainly **cost**, as compared with other development organizations. (I'm sure a country Peace Corps program is more costly than it might appear on the surface, but nevertheless the volunteers are working **cost-effectively**. (B6 ENV Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine);

At least in my experience in the field of education, **the short & long term payoffs for that investment are enormous**, & utilizing native English speakers was very effective. Then, with that established relationship with the school & community, more **projects & programs** could be successfully implemented. (B17 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine).

Still, one volunteer lamented:

However, **the program does not seem professional enough**. There is no academic, research, or strong professional focus that makes people feel accountable to their work. The temporary feeling we all have creates a waiting game when the time frame could instead be used to create a **work plan with measurable goals and opportunities** to include home country nationals and youth. (B26 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine).

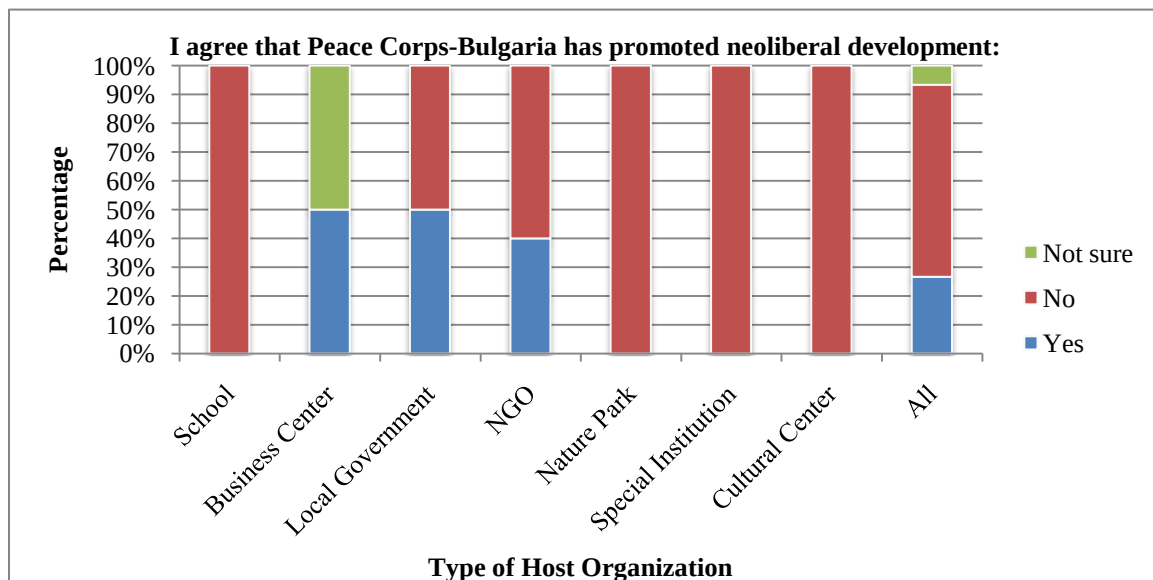
Project management is part of the new management model, therefore volunteers were involved in the practice of neoliberal governance.

Local Partner Perceptions

Local Partner Perceptions by Type of Host Organization: Among the local partners,¹⁰² the majority (67%) disagreed that Peace Corps promote neoliberal development, followed by those who agreed (27%), and those who were “Not sure” (7%) (see Figure 58). The main disagreement was over the belief that since their organization was not in the economic field then Peace Corps could not have promoted this type of development. Thus, all representatives from the schools, the nature park, the special institution (a social service provider NGO), and the cultural centers disagreed with the statement. The business center, local government, and NGO representatives expressed mixed opinions.

¹⁰² In the focus groups, participants from the same organizations shared the same opinion meaning that there was a silent agreement with the first person who expressed an opinion on the question. This has affected five respondents who did not express their own opinion. I have treated those five cases as skipped questions.

Figure 58: Local Partner Perceptions on Neoliberal Development by Type of Host Organization, n=15



One of the local government (municipal) partners disagreed because this type of development was not something that the municipality had wanted and they also didn't think that the volunteers were capable of promoting it: *"No, we didn't have such expectations. They can't and we didn't expect."* (Municipality Partner, Garmen Focus Group). An NGO local partner with a similar reasoning wanted the addition of a "Not applicable" answer option:

*We didn't aim for it and we didn't achieve or entered this neoliberal model... **the question is not correct from a civil society perspective because the volunteer cannot apply, even if they want to, some neoliberal development model.** How could they influence? In no way. [...] Theory is nice but...I would answer this question with "Not applicable."* (NGO Local Partner from Veliko Tarnovo, Interview, emphasis mine).

The lack of expectations for the volunteers to implement such types of activities does not necessarily indicate a negative normative evaluation of neoliberal development. What is clear is that local partners saw the volunteers in a supportive role: to follow the lead/meet the expectations of the host organization. In this sense, they attribute larger agency (decision-making power) to themselves rather than the volunteers. The latter echoes the stipulations of the Country

Agreement where volunteers were expected to “work under the direct supervision” of a local organization, as well as the volunteer comment from the previous section that the promotion of neoliberal development within Peace Corps/Bulgaria was driven by the host organizations/communities.

There were different rationales explaining why some partners agreed with the statement. For example, one of the business center partners equated neoliberal with economic development: “yes, with us this is the only focus: the creating of economic activity, economic development” (Business Center Partner, Elhovo Focus Group). A local government partner felt that the promotion of neoliberal development was complementary to the volunteers’ efforts to promote alternative development:

*I think that there is a connection between the two. It can’t be one way. I think that this is correct, that it is not full promotion of neoliberal development because **the focus wasn’t entirely on neoliberal development or that it was at the expense of neoliberal development or vice-versa**. But the community development – increasing the capacity of people, stabilization of the NGO sector – it leads to the other as well because these organizations begin to make products, some quality. Some of them are even part of the economy – from NGOs they have become other. So I think that there is a connection. (Municipality Partner in Gabrovo, Interview, emphasis mine)*

The notion that the neoliberal and alternative development approaches reinforce each other is unique among all research participants but the specific example – how the NGO sector “stabilizes” itself by operating for-profit activities – was given by another NGO representative who also believed that Peace Corps had promoted neoliberal development:

*With us as I mentioned we started a profit initiative with the help of the volunteers and developed plans and steps for the creation of other ones. We wrote a few projects to Foundation America for Bulgaria which targeted **profit activities which is very good for non-profit activities because in general if a non-profit organization doesn’t have its own profit activities it dies**. If there is a project there is money, if there are no projects there are no money. So because of that we were directed in this way of thinking. (NGO Partner, Burgas Focus Group, emphasis mine)*

In the above quote, the clear implication is that the operation of for-profit activities by non-profits or NGOs, known in the U.S. as unrelated business income, is another mechanism for the neoliberalization of the non-profit sector.

Another NGO partner equated the promotion of neoliberal development with the adoption of the PDM (grant writing) culture. Winning grants from private and public foundations or government programs is the better-known NGO sustainability strategy in addition to direct fundraising from individuals:

*I think that it promotes. I began purposefully by talking about myself. I think that I began with Peace Corps and without doubt for my colleagues who learned how to work on projects because everything that I learned was discussed in our small team and **our first knowledge and contacts with PCVs and Peace Corps the information that we received helped us start working on projects.** (NGO Partner Sredets and Burgas, Interview, emphasis mine)*

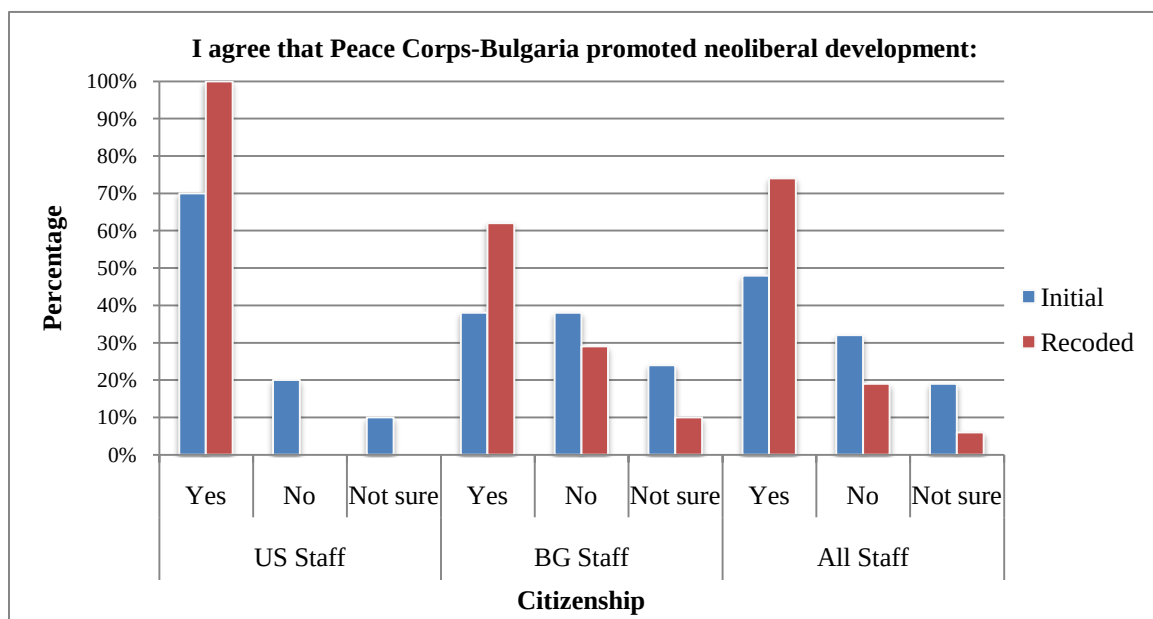
Among all local partners only two expressed opinions that indicated familiarity with the academic concept of neoliberalism, and both of them had political science degrees. One was the NGO partner who argued that the notion that Peace Corps/Bulgaria promoted neoliberal development was inapplicable. The other was a Nature Park partner who disagreed with the statement, while expressing his disapproval of this type of political project:

*Our program didn't include market approaches....Look in Bulgaria people who are involved in politics or the economy or both, neoliberal ...**when you say neoliberal approach I think about it as something negative because this is a Thatcher-ian, monetary approach which at the end this type of approach leads to global catastrophe of the whole civilization!** Because everything is about profit, this is what is leading but with this profit all other humanitarian aspects of an economy are secondary. It leads to a horrible catastrophe. You can read about this in every bulletin of the Earth. There are many involved in this problem. So, the neoliberal has a negative connotation. (Nature Park Partner, Malko Tarnovo Focus Group, emphasis mine)*

Staff Perceptions

The local program staff split on the question of whether Peace Corps/Bulgaria promoted neoliberal development: 48% agreed that it did, 32% disagreed, and 19% chose the “not sure” option (see Figure 59). When the citizenship of the program staff is accounted for, the US staff were much more likely to agree with the statement (70% agreed that it did) compared to Bulgarian staff (38% agreed that it did).

Figure 59: Staff Perceptions of Neoliberal Development by Citizenship and Coding (n=31)



However, content analysis of the comments following the initial answer to the question showed a much more nuanced understanding of the question than a simple “Yes,” “No,” and “Not sure” answer. In some cases, “yes” and “no” answers meant essentially the same, but were associated with a different answer item perhaps due to cultural differences (seeing the glass as half full versus seeing the glass as half empty):

Yes Answer: *I would say, if this had been done in the first three years, then ... successful or unsuccessful, yes would be 98% because that's what the focus was... English was the language of commerce and SBD, so you know. (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine);*

No Answer: *Maybe when Peace Corps started working, functioning in Bulgaria, it used to be their main focus but I don't think that in the last years it was something that was, you know, highlighted in our work. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine).*

With the recoded answers, all US program staff agreed that Peace Corps/Bulgaria promoted neoliberal development, while a smaller percentage of the Bulgarian staff disagrees (less than 29%) or are unsure about the statement (10%).

The recoded “Yes” and “No” categories include a range of interpretations that could be broken down further (See Figure 60). In the “**Yes**” category are nine staff members who agree without hesitation that Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development including those who were unsure about the success and appropriateness of the approach:

I cannot say if we succeeded in it that but I strongly believe that we did promote it. (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview)

I agree that they promoted neoliberal development and again I am not sure that this was the best model for Bulgaria. (BG Program Assistant, Interview)

The “**Yes, partially**” category includes opinions according to which neoliberal development was limited to certain Peace Corps programs (SBD and CED) or during the early years of the mission: “*Maybe when Peace Corps started working, functioning in Bulgaria, it used to be their main focus but I don't think that in the last years it was something that was, you know, highlighted in our work*” (BG Program Manager, Interview). This category also includes two opinions that neoliberal development was promoted only when host organizations wanted this kind of development and a general belief that this wasn't the “dominant perspective”:

Peace Corps does not try to prescribe a particular thing but to present a broader range of options. So in some cases those options that are presented you know they may say

“yea, that is good for us” and in some others they will say “No there are reasons why we don’t like that. (US APCD – Programming & Training, Interview)

In the “**Yes, but not intentionally**” category I grouped those answers that separated the development approach of the agency from the development activities of individual volunteers. Here, the assumption was that neoliberal development was promoted by volunteers, who were sometimes oblivious to this effect, but not the agency itself. This understanding of Peace Corps speaks to the hegemony of neoliberalism as an ideology and the internationalization of neoliberal values as American values:

*First of all, the aim was not to have a specific political philosophy. Their goal was not to debate the high philosophy of that development, I think. That said if you get people who have a market approach in what they do as development in their local community, which was **inborn in the PCVs**, then you definitely supported, although we were not, how I should say, formally striving, you know, to have it as a goal. So **it was kind of an implicit thing**. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine).*

One Country Director, himself a former volunteer, expressed a similar understanding about the volunteers’ subjectivity as neoliberal subjectivity:

*Most volunteers ... were pretty young and probably wouldn’t even understand what any of that staff meant while there were volunteers. I mean, I do think that we can promote things by who we are without even knowing that we promoting them, right. Because we have basic attitudes in this country...**I had a sort of natural entrepreneurial business neoliberal approach to things that I wasn’t even aware of**, right. (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine)*

The “**No, the approach was different**” includes answers only by Bulgarian staff who argued that: “*Peace Corps promoted what we call **a holistic approach** towards development which focuses on community strength and resources from outside and within the community*” (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine).

Figure 60: Staff Perceptions of Neoliberal Development in Detail by Citizenship, n=31

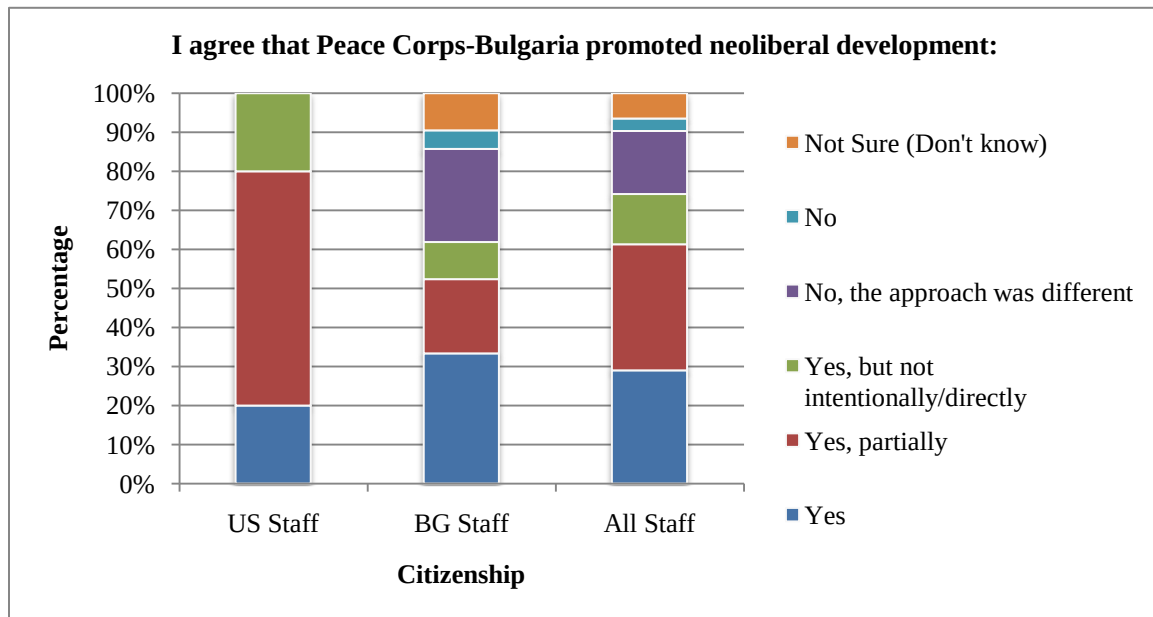


Figure 61: Staff Perceptions on Alternative Development by Citizenship, n=31

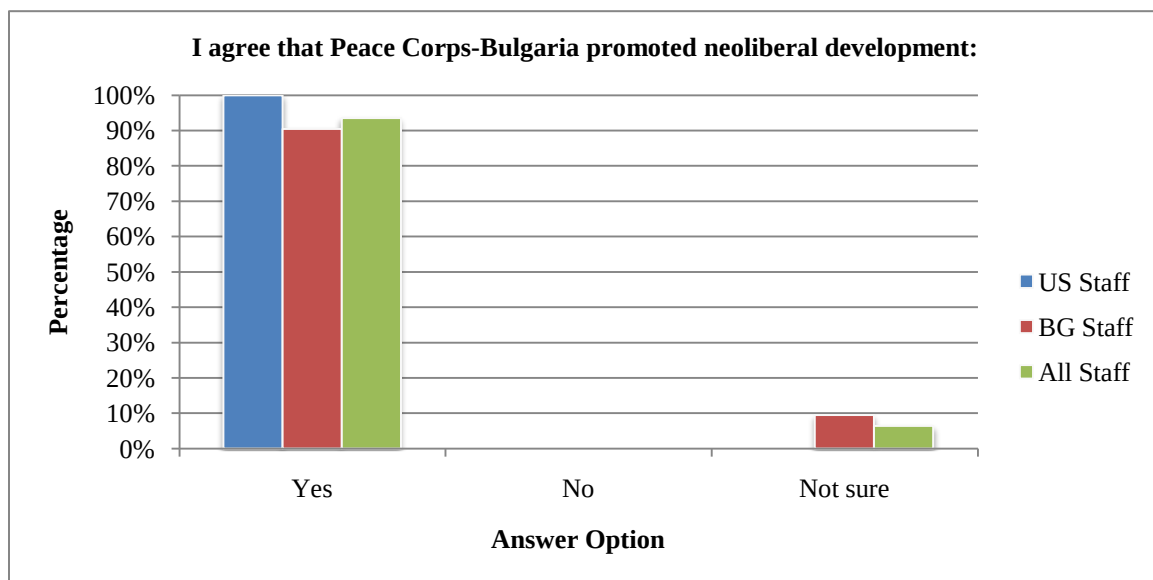


Figure 61 shows that those who agreed that Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development also agreed that Peace Corps promoted alternative development, indicating that the

staff did not think of neoliberal and alternative approaches as exclusive of each other. Moreover, the concurrent implementation of neoliberal (more or less explicitly) and alternative development approaches is what can explain why it is possible that “*Some volunteers promoted, while others challenged neoliberal development*” (Country Director, Interview).

Comparison between Actor Perspectives on Neoliberal Development

Table 25 summarizes different notions of neoliberal development by actor. Collectively they cover all of the three main conceptions of neoliberalism (as an ideological project, policy, and governance/governmentality) through associations of neoliberal development with certain values/goals, practices (activities) and attitudes (subjectivities), as well as neoliberal development through the neoliberal cooptation of community development.

Altogether, the volunteer and partner concepts of neoliberal development were more alike compared to the volunteer and staff concepts or the staff and local partner concepts. The volunteers and partners shared an understanding of neoliberal development as grant/project management as well as that neoliberal development was connected to alternative development. The volunteers and staff saw neoliberal development as a type of subjectivity or as specific volunteer attitudes that could promote neoliberal development indirectly. Only the staff and the partners discussed neoliberal development as a political philosophy or project. Both groups were also similar in their view on the data about the volunteer perceptions as both hypothesized incorrectly that the three-way split in the volunteer subscribe survey answers was associated with the project assignment of the volunteers: business volunteers (SBD and CED) saying “Yes,” environmental and youth volunteers saying “No,” and English teachers saying “Not sure.” All

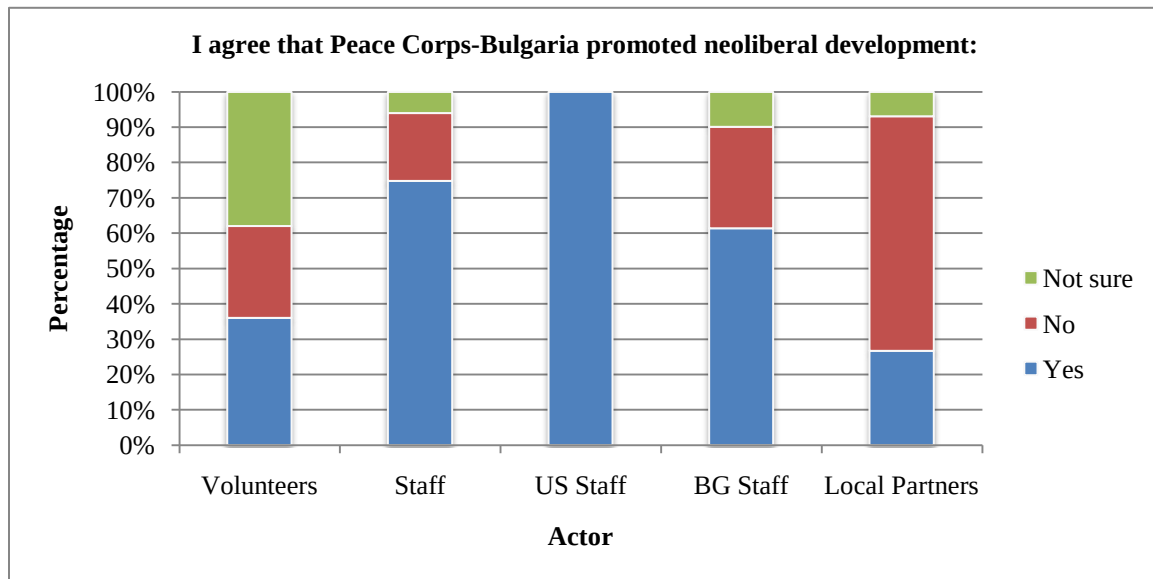
three types of actors shared an understanding of neoliberal development as business/economic development activity.

Table 25: Conceptions of Neoliberal Development by Type of Research Participant

Concept of neoliberal development	Volunteers	Staff	Partners
Neoliberal project ideology			
• Political philosophy/project		x	x
Neoliberal policy			
• Business/economic activity	x	x	x
Neoliberal governance (governmentality)			
• Junior Achievement	x		
• Grant/project management	x		x
• NGO for-profit activities			x
• Volunteer Attitudes (Subjectivity)	x	x	
Neoliberal cooptation			
• Community strengthening	x		

The distributions of actor perceptions on neoliberal development, however, were specific to each actor group (see Figure 62). The volunteers split between the three answer options, the majority of the staff agreed, while the majority of the local partners disagreed with the notion that Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development. When the staff is split into US and BG staff, the differences are even larger with the BG staff and the local partners showing reverse perceptions. The general trend is that the US Staff was more accepting of the idea that Peace Corps promoted neoliberal development, followed by the BG staff, the volunteers, and the local partners.

Figure 62: Comparison between Actor Perceptions on Neoliberal Development

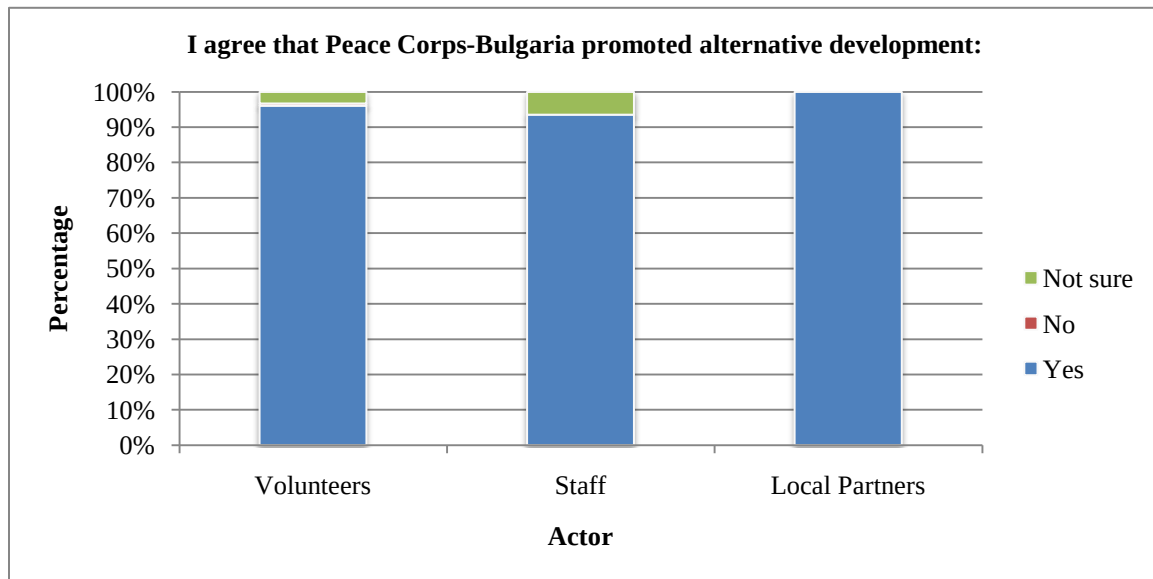


Note: Sample sizes: Volunteers (n = 151), Staff (n=31), Local Partners (n= 15).

ON PEACE CORPS' "ALTERNATIVE" DEVELOPMENT MODEL

Compared to the significant differences in the actor perceptions on Peace Corps' promotion of neoliberal development, the main actor perceptions on Peace Corps' promotion of alternative development were almost identical (see Figure 63). Moreover, while the notion of neoliberal development was associated with both positive and negative value judgments, all actors – volunteer, staff, and local partners - were approving of Peace Corps' efforts in alternative development: *"this was their primary focus, yes, and this is where their strength was"* (NGO Partner, Elhovo Focus Group). Analysis of the actors' articulations of Peace Corps' development model in open-ended questions revealed important differences in their understanding of "alternative" development.

Figure 63: Comparison between Actor Perceptions on Alternative Development



Note: Sample sizes: Volunteers (n = 151), Staff (n=31), Local Partners (n= 15).

The Volunteers' Understanding: Collaborative Custom Development

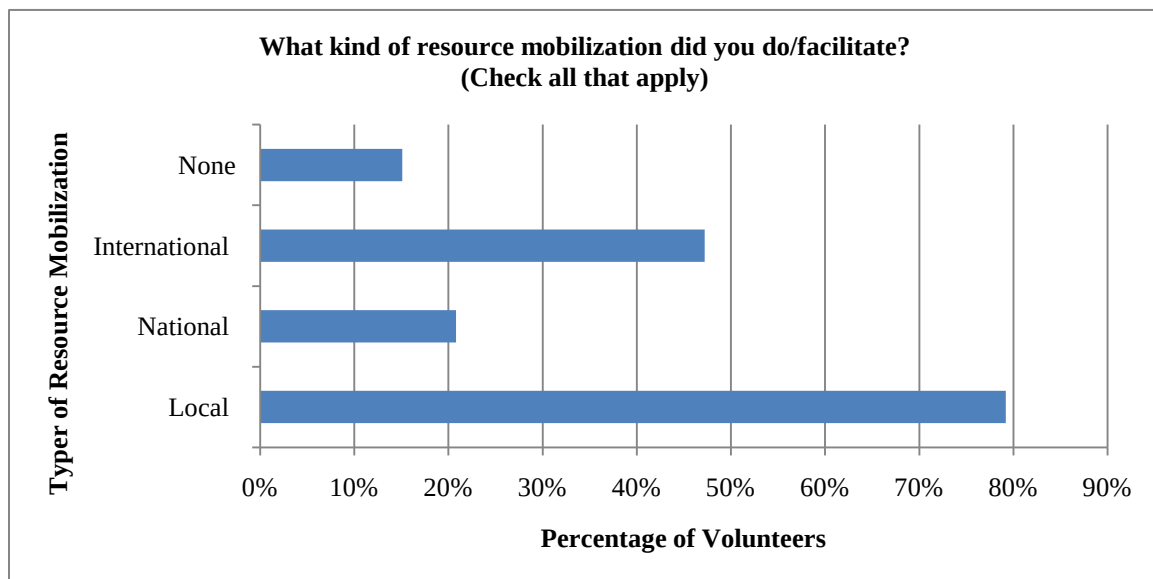
The most common characterization of the Peace Corps development model was “grassroots development” understood as a level/scope of development – at the local community level, then as an egalitarian/participatory approach to development – community-driven rather than expert-driven, and as development as a process of change through access to a different way of thinking and being that was enabled by the specific terms of the volunteer service:

*The method is **grassroots, micro-local, community-driven** with small impacts on individuals and communities that build up over time and incrementally. Agents are the PCVs themselves, and the counterparts and local individuals who facilitate their ability to live and work. In part they represent **access to a way of thinking and being**, a culture, a world, and markets and opportunities outside of the communities and countries in which they live. Their two year presence and the fact that they live modestly among the people is also part of the methodology as **it builds trust and relationships** that last over time. Development can thus continue to happen even after the volunteer departs. (B1 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)*

While, the volunteers lived and worked **at the local level** they were also active in connecting their local community to international resources (see Figure 64). In this sense, Peace Corps’ approach sits at the local-global nexus with the volunteers acting as local-global connectors:

I thought that the most valuable thing I ever did was open doors, you know, to resources and connect people and all the people I worked with they were moved on... so that was very rewarding. It was probably the most rewarding work I have ever done in my life and I have done a lot of different things. (B2 SBD Volunteer, Interview)

Figure 64: Volunteer Self-Assessment on Their Resource Mobilization, n= 53



The community-driven or **participatory** aspect of Peace Corps’ approach concerns a particular vision of power dynamics. With regards to the agency of the locals, very few volunteers talked about the “introduction” of new and “better” ideas and practices in a language that conveyed a sense of cultural superiority:

*For example in the TEFL program language shapes thoughts and in the teaching of American English different ideas are introduced. These ideas are then **molded** into the Bulgarian identity and **either adapted or rejected**. The very existence of them leads to a change in thoughts. (B5 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)*

More volunteers used the language of “co-creation” or “support” and emphasized their role as a “partner” in change. Volunteer-community partnerships that promote cooperative and egalitarian relationships exemplify the values of counter-neoliberal volunteering:

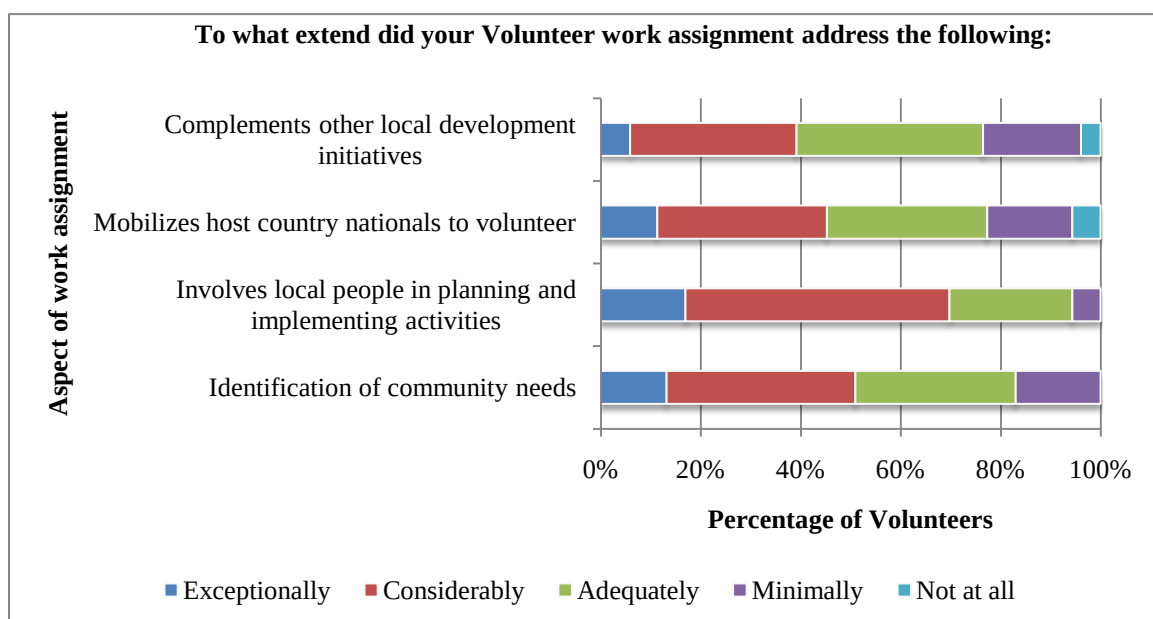
*Peace Corps works with existing agencies and **aids to develop** new ideas, assist with funding plans and incorporate different business models as needed. I believe the goal is to reach **a collaborative decision** branching different cultures. (B14 ENV Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)*

*Peace Corps addresses specific needs in each community, and has volunteers **work together with their neighbors to meet their goals**. This model strongly goes against the stereotype of Americans swooping in to "save the day" and doing all the work themselves. (B21 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)*

*I think that as a volunteer you go in very naively like I am gonna help people, you know and once you are in **Peace Corps** they ... **try to shape your understanding of community development and partnership** that it is not that I am helping people but that I am working as a partner with my community. (B17 TEFL Volunteer, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Figure 65 shows that the volunteers were more successful in engendering participation (Involves local people in planning and implementing activities) compared to cooperation (Complements other local development initiatives).

Figure 65: Volunteer Self-Assessment on the Success of Their Work, n=54



The development or change through the introduction of **new ways of thinking and being** was articulated primarily in the language of *skill transfer and capacity building*: improvement or enhancement of the technical/professional skills and knowledge of the locals, the development of their human capital, their capacity building, all of which describe a one-way learning process. Since the transfer of skills represents development at the personal level it is also an example of development that focuses on individual empowerment projects. The latter can be a neoliberal mechanism, especially when the focus on human development is perceived as an end goal rather than as a means for the empowerment of the whole community, which is a counter-neoliberal mechanism. Below are some examples that highlight the difference:

Focus on individual empowerment: *Some Peace Corps volunteers helped individuals develop small businesses with a global outlook via Internet sales. (B26 YD Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)*

Focus on individual and collective empowerment: *Peace Corps is designed to assist the people of underdeveloped to develop and/or enhance skills **to better the lives that are directly touched by the volunteer but also the population as a whole** by passing on the skills and information gained. (B15 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)*

Focus on collective empowerment: *Peace Corps works to help local organizations develop grassroots efforts **to support and grow local communities**. It empowers the local people to implement their ideas by connecting them with volunteers and resources to help them succeed. (B20 YD Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)*

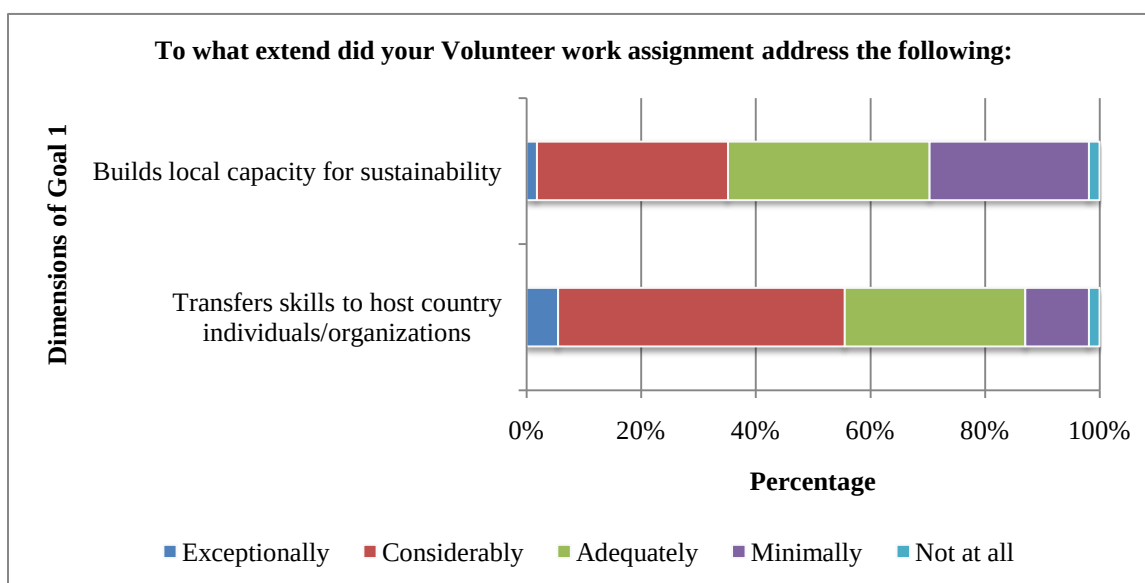
Figure 66 shows that overall, the volunteers felt more successful in transferring skills compared to building local capacity. Among the various skills that volunteer helped to transfer, **working with grants/projects** was mentioned often and was articulated both as a new way of thinking and as a new way of doing:

*Peace Corps is such a grassroots thing in that really **what you are doing in sort of ... creating a framework for how to think about projects and how to think about development** and kind of get the tools to do the development work....So much of what we are doing is just kind of **laying the groundwork so that someone like USIAD or the EU** can go in with their own development programs and initiatives and things like that could be more effective. Or maybe because you taught so many people English now there are*

*people working in NGOs that are bilingual or trilingual or multilingual and can **apply for grants to foreign organizations** themselves in multiple languages. **That is to the skills transfer.*** (B14 ENV/COD Volunteer, Volunteer Focus Group, emphasis mine)

The notion that the volunteers were “laying the groundwork” for other major donor such as USAID and the EU, positions Peace Corps as an enabler of mainstream development rather than as an alternative development organization. The latter conveys a sense of subversiveness in the Peace Corps approach.

Figure 66: Volunteer Self-Assessment on Their Success with Goal 1, n=54



Interestingly, one of the findings from the volunteer focus group discussion with PCVs who served in Bulgaria the mid 2000s was that they had acquired their grant-writing/PDM skills during their Peace Corps service. This means that Peace Corps/Bulgaria created and shaped the PDM culture of both volunteers and their local partners.

Interviewer: *I want to ask you if the concept of a project was foreign to you when you came to the Peace Corps in terms of knowing how to design and how to manage projects or was it something that you already knew.*

B15 TEFL Volunteer: *My background was sociology and anthropology. I had never really done, I did not had an exposure to development work so it was new for me. **It was combination of learning from past volunteers about their project and learning from their experiences and then just stumbling along and figuring things out... and also really relying on my counterpart.** My counterpart was great. Just her connections in the community and her background and how she understood the politics in the town that I lived in was extremely important in helping me making my projects successful. I think that if I hadn't had a strong counterpart, my projects wouldn't have been that successful; because I was very young. I was right out of college and I didn't have a lot of experience. If I had gone in the program now, I would have been able to accomplish so much more. But lot of it was learning along the way for me.*

Interviewer: *What about for you guys?*

B14 ENV/COD Volunteer: *I was so completely naïve and green and I had no idea what was doing. Same thing. You just hit the ground running and you just have to **learn as you go.***

B12 ENV Volunteer: *I think that the concept of a project had been sort of nebulously developed before I entered the Peace Corps but Peace Corps certainly through grantwriting **and through the training and through the experience it became much more concrete** like the actual phases of: you need a monitoring and an evaluation plan, you need to think through all these different steps along the way to get to whatever the end of that project is became clearer after I rolled-up my sleeves and got into several projects. And certainly I didn't come with that experience at the time. (Excerpts from the Volunteer Focus Group Transcript, emphasis mine)*

One volunteer clarified that “*I think the Peace Corps focused a lot on skills transfers, but that depended a lot on **the willingness of the host agency to take** the input of those skills, and also **the abilities and experience of the Peace Corps volunteer**” (B12 CED Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine). This comment highlights two different aspects of the development process. First, that the subjects of development - the locals - have an agency of their own that could be exercised more passively or more actively. Secondly, that the objects of development - the volunteers - had a range and degree of technical expertise that shaped their development agency.*

Going back to the comment that highlighted that Peace Corps volunteers came with a range and degree of technical expertise, a surprising finding was the acknowledgement that the

volunteers themselves were the subject of skill development or learning. Some of this development was provided by Peace Corps in the form of pre- and in-service volunteer training: *“The Peace Corps method was **to provide or augment the knowledge and skills of volunteers** so they could use demonstration and example to influence people and accomplish the stated goals”* (B12 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine). Those trainings were done by US and BG staff, as well as by local experts. Technical learning continued on site with volunteers learning how to do development while doing it. Therefore, the Peace Corps experience itself results in *“...developing the international understand[ing] and skill base of those American citizens who become volunteers”* (B25 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey). A two-way technical learning is a form of reciprocal exchange and therefore an example of a counter-neoliberal mechanism. When volunteers acknowledge learning from the local people, they are validating the worth of the local people’s skills and knowledge and supports equalizing of power dynamics. Yet, the notion that the *“...the individuals who serve have some skills but largely use the experience to develop skills that will better serve future jobs and postings than the Peace Corps placements”* (B14 YD Volunteer, Follow-up Survey) is linked to instrumental motivations to volunteer and the professionalization of volunteering, which is a form of commodification and therefore an example of a neoliberal governance practice. The same volunteer opined that *“Peace Corps is certainly an individual development program for young professionals”* (B14 YD Volunteer, Follow-up Survey) shifting entirely the development focus from the host country to the volunteers. Similar notions were also articulated by the US staff who were also RPCVs.

The majority of volunteers, considered the recruitment of volunteers with little skills and experience as a major weakness of the program. The concern was that: *“...the expectations of my host country was to have a more specialized and experienced volunteer versus someone with little to none work experience”* (B9 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine). The belief was that that

strong technical expertise “...*may be needed to implement projects that the community needs.* [and that] *Because the model depends so heavily on the quality of the individual, **the youth or immaturity or personal characteristics of the volunteers can have a negative impact*** (B1 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine).

The merger of the CED and ENV program into the COD program was an effort to address exactly the concerns about the under-qualification of the volunteers. Furthermore, during my focus groups with local partners, they shared that the problem was not so much when volunteers lacked knowledge and experience but when they were unwilling to learn new skills.

Finally, Peace Corps’ grassroots, community-driven (participatory), mind-changing model is embedded in the **specifics or conditions of service** that asks volunteers to spend two years living and working in conditions similar to the local people, while using the local language and with the support of a variety of host-country nationals: host family, local counterpart, local language teacher, and the local program staff. According to the volunteers, these conditions were the main strength of the Peace Corps development approach because they allowed the volunteers to understand and contribute to lasting local development efforts:

*The major strengths are the cross-cultural acculturation and language training that allows PCVs to be more **effective and empathetic servants** to meet the community's needs. The emphasis on working so closely with the community in which you serve, learning their language and respecting their customs allows for cross-cultural understanding, friendship and **leads to a more lasting and productive level of development work.*** (B8 ENV Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine).

These conditions promoted the values of solidarity and equality and allowed Peace Corps to “do” development as a way of being. The volunteers exemplified positivity, open-mindedness, ethnic tolerance, gender equality, etc. and how one acts as a volunteer.

Overall, the volunteers felt that the implementation of the Peace Corps development model required **relationship building**, which some of them articulated as the goal and/or the e

process of their service. When relationship building was articulated as a goal/outcome it was in the context of emphasizing the cross-cultural goals of Peace Corps (Goals 2 and 3). When relationship building was articulated as a process it emphasized the importance of relationships in accomplishing development goals: “[c]ommunity oriented development, using time & placement in place of a big budget, volunteers **leverage relationships with local stakeholders to accomplish goals**” (B17 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine).

The emphasis on relationship building by the volunteers was surprising for some of the staff members who felt that the American and Bulgarian understandings of people-centered approaches were quite different:

*Our understanding of people-centered approaches is slightly different from [laughing] the American understanding of that notion. **I think local people always perceived the volunteers as very much focused on the tasks, on the objectives, on the final goals and not on the people relationships.** That’s what local counterparts have shared with me and actually....some of the volunteers were of course extremely successful in focusing on people-centered approaches and using them but...probably due to our culture and traditions our understanding of people-centeredness is still quite different and would always be different from the American understanding. (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview, emphasis mine).*

The Local Partners’ Understanding: Subjective-Resource-Through-People Development

The local partners echoed the volunteers’ assessment of the model as dependent on the qualities and willingness of both the volunteers and the local people to live and work together. Therefore, they characterized the model as “subjective.” In addition, many commented on the importance of the site-placement process or the matching of volunteers with host communities, organizations, and local partners.

Municipality Partner: ***It was very interesting to me how they adapt; how flexible they are and how they adapt to different environments.*** What a contrast. Deborah from NY and ended up in Ribnovo.

School Partner: *Such a closed community.*

Municipality Partner: *A super closed community. I am curious about this village, this community but I don't know it. She was placed there and lived there for 2 years and felt good, she felt super. What a contrast! Often I have asked myself if this happens to me if I would be able to adapt, what kind of qualities should I have. What kind of mindset to feel good for 2 years in NY?*

School Partner: ***I somehow wonder how they [the staff] do the matching. There were hits!***

Interviewer: *You mean that they were good fits?*

School Partner: *Yes! We are the same municipality but Garmen is nothing like Ribnovo. Ribnovo is nothing like Gorno Dryanovo or Gotse Delchevo. **They [the communities] are so different and they [the volunteers] were like rocks falling to their right places.** This has always been very interesting to me. (Excerpt from the Garmen Focus Group Transcript, emphasis mine)*

The importance of the site-placement process, underscored the role of the local program staff in developing the sites and being good judges on which organization would be the best match for a particular volunteer.

In two of the host communities – Garmen and Gabrovo - the local partners talked specifically about the distinction of Peace Corps as a participatory-community-driven model in contrast to other organizations that came with ready know-how and plans about what changes need to happen in their communities and saw the local people simply as implementers of those plans:

*To me I liked this format. Not just the Peace Corps, but if there is another organization that can send you a young person who can come to integrate, to live with you, to help you...it is wonderful but **not to come with some specific, secret goals while some organizations that come here Roma, Muslim...they gave a goal to force something...**not to...I don't care where they are from. They can from a place other than the US. They can be from Africa. They can be...it doesn't matter what religion. **If they came to get to know me and to allow me to know him. To get to know me! And to work with me so that it is good for both of us it doesn't matter where he is from...**the Ivory Coast! It doesn't matter. But it should be like this. Otherwise there are many that come but they have a specific goal. There are some Koreans here, Adventists, they are something different. This is not for everyone and can't be of community benefit like this format. (School Partner, Garmen Focus Group, emphasis mine)*

I have seen different approach: we come, we know what you need, we propose you this if you would like to do this, you do it or...goodbye, you know. This is very

different...and I think this is good to see different approaches. (NGO Partner, Gabrovo, emphasis mine)

In the other focus groups – in Burgas, Elhovo, and Malko Tarnovo – the local partners emphasizes that their assessment of the volunteers (and the Peace Corps model) depended on how the volunteer made them feel about themselves:

Nature Park Partner A: *So, you have to give them work and it is very important that you shouldn't limit contact only during work hours that there should be meeting after work hours. They like that when you invite them to different occasions. We always went to gatherings together, celebrations. **They were part of the team and they behaved as a team member. They didn't want to show that they knew more than us. They were very appropriate.** Personally, I never felt that I am somehow...they treated us equally.*

Nature Park Partner B: *They didn't underestimate us.*

Nature Park Partner A: ***We never felt underestimated.** It is true, some things...*

Cultural Center Partner: *Ours behaved as if she is above all Bulgarians.*

Nature Park Partner A: *This was not the case with us but I know that in some of the other parks there were such cases.* (Excerpt from the Malko Tarnovo Focus Group Transcript, emphasis mine)

The understanding and appreciation of Peace Corps as an alternative model, which promotes egalitarian relationships and participatory-community development, was often combined with an instrumental use of the volunteers for income/resource generation:

*I view the role of the Peace Corps in **bringing more resources** and more opportunities.* (Peace Corps/Bulgaria Business Center/Municipality Partner in Vidin, Interview, emphasis mine)

*Our expectations were met; I can't say that they weren't met. He worked entirely with children because CSRI is for children with disabilities and at risk children. [...] and **his main work was to work with the children and to write projects and to win money.** That is what he said "Use me for this. This is my strength" which is normal and we reached something but unfortunately he left earlier.* (NGO Partner, Elhovo Focus Group, emphasis mine)

*At some point we stopped because the ENV program ended and they didn't have volunteers. We learned about this because **the goal of each volunteer is to contribute financially. Each one had to write at least one project.** But it turned out that we overproduced projects and got more money. [...] **there was always some financial gain:** if not through Peace Corps from, then from other funding organizations. One volunteer would pass along his project to the next one. There was always a carryover. There was*

work for them. If you have a volunteer you must give him work. It is also very important who is... [Nature Park Partner 1: the counterpart] on the Bulgarian side. Even for small things. They execute well if you give them a task. (Nature Park Partner, Malko Tarnovo Focus Group, emphasis mine)

If the volunteers did not bring additional resources, the local partners appreciated when the volunteers could at least share a new perspective on the use of already existing resources.

*Perhaps that she introduced very different things; her approach in teaching. Here we are more traditional. She introduced different things: the camps, a water day, something elementary but we didn't think of it. The day of the water she organized it at the stadium and we were just talking that we need to organize it again. **Our approach is perhaps a grander one: we need resources, we need this, while she with elementary things managed to do great experiences for the children** not for....she filled balloons with waters and asked everyone to bring a pistol. We put a put a piece of plastic sheet on the ground, some water and washing liquid and they slid, splashed, played... wearing bathing suits in a hot weather. It was nothing but we couldn't think of it....maybe this is what they see at their schools. (School Partner, Garmen Focus Group, emphasis mine)*

*For example, **from her we learned and still do the so-called "mixed table"**. Everyone contributes by making something: pasty, different culinary dishes and we put those on a table outside and we sell those. Everyone brings something and we sell those but we thought that people wouldn't participate but learned from her that this is how you do that and we tried and it was successful and at least once a year we continue to do this. We fundraise about 200 leva and we use those for the festival but we learned about this practice from her. (Cultural Center, Malko Tarnovo Focus Group, emphasis mine)*

Some local partners shared that their main motivation to request a volunteer was to provide volunteer role models for their beneficiary groups:

*...personal example was the main motivation for us and still is **because our organizations is based on volunteers** – 15 to 30 volunteers at any time – and a great amount of our work is done by volunteers and the idea was to show our boys and girls who work with us and for us that there are other people from other nations and environments, because our volunteers are mainly Roma and poor, to show them that there are rich people with position who volunteer. James was a manager in a big hotel complex and the time she spent with them and explained what she came up to feel satisfied from live, to feel useful....this was it: the personal example. (NGO Partner, Burgas Focus Group, emphasis mine)*

Others partners opined that Peace Corps contributed for the adoption of a culture of volunteerism in the country:

Nature Park Partner A: *To me from the distance of time I see that a community emerged from people who worked with Peace Corps and PCVs. This was very useful the first few years: community like the association of RPCVs because I participated regularly for 7-8 years and I knew the old and the new counterparts. Our system didn't create this but Peace Corps united the whole country in this regards: Rhodopi, Pirin, all regions, NGOs, municipalities.*

Nature Park Partner B: ***And many accepted this work model: working with volunteers.***

Interviewer: *motivating volunteerism in the community.*

Nature Park Partner B: *A Bulgarian volunteer community was created, which was useful. Unfortunately, it doesn't exist anymore. (Excerpt from Malko Tarnovo Focus Group Transcript, emphasis mine)*

The role of Peace Corps/Bulgaria in facilitating and sustaining a community of organizations working with volunteers during its operation in the country speaks to the limited power of alternative development as a way of being. Once the platform for interaction (Peace Corps/Bulgaria) was removed when the program closed, the community seized to exist.

The Staff's Understanding: Mutual Development

The main role of the local program staff was to identify and prepare volunteer host organizations, to prepare the volunteers for their placements, and to support both the volunteers and the local organizations in problem-solving. According to the staff, after the task of explaining what Peace Corps was (addressing any possible misconceptions about the three core goals), the main challenge was managing the expectation that the volunteers were proxies for financial support. The issue was when volunteers were tasked to find funding for already existing developed projects (mostly through grant-writing), not when they helped/participated in the design and management of new projects. If volunteers were used only as fundraisers, especially if they were tasked to do that by themselves rather than with a local partner, they were excluded from the very part of the development process where notions of development goals, approaches and outcomes were determined. Essentially, they could not transfer their decision-making skills

and knowledge/design skills. And if the latter was coupled with no expectations for participation of the volunteer in the implementation of the project, they could not transfer their management skills either. Here is how one staff member explained the challenges in implementing the Peace Corps model:

*It is one of the most difficult ones because it provides human resource which is supposed to be the change agent, multiplying the effect upon as many people as possible who possibly would become the follow-up change agents in that community.[...] but the financial factor was leading and that's why **local people preferred to work often with organizations that will provide them with the money, right now.** Give me the money, I know what to do kind of notion, **while Peace Corps' approach is more challenging was more challenging because you teach the person, how to fish...you don't give him the fish** and of course people are not patient, they thought that they were smart enough and that they know everything and they don't need somebody's advice or different perspective or cultural background or best practices because they know what to do they just need the money to do it. (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)*

From the above quote it is clear that there was significant resistance on the part of the local people to be treated as subjects of development. In this situation, it makes sense why the local staff emphasized the reciprocal cross-cultural goals of the organization, development through example and asking questions and development as mutual learning that changes both the local people and the volunteers. APPENDIX J: A Vignette features a description of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria development model in action by a Bulgarian staff member who had a PCV as an English Teacher and served as a counterpart for multiple volunteers prior to joining Peace Corps as a program assistant.

The Bulgarian local staff especially highlighted how living and working in Bulgaria had changed the volunteers for the better:

*We are a family country, you know, we are a different type and **the volunteers liked that and they preferred to de-structure themselves in order to work together (integrate) rather than to try to structure their partners.** [...] From all my work, I was most impressed how they changed in those 2 years – from their arrival to their departure – **absolutely changed people creative, open, ...different.** I have talked about this with many volunteers: they change here. (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)*

*It was interesting that many of them, when they came here, somehow they focused more on working in the corporate world and that was an option for them to get some international experience and start working for Peace Corps and came back and work for big companies. **But after 2 years I could say that 70-80% totally changed their minds and somehow focused more on Like social issues, development issues, NGOs. This was very good.*** (BG Program Manager, Interview, emphasis mine)

In the second quote, the sentiment is that the Peace Corps experience in Bulgaria had the effect of turning neoliberal subjectivities (PCVs who came from the corporate world and/or with instrumental motivations) into counter-neoliberal subjectivities (RPCVs who care about social issues).

In addition to serving as mediators of development processes between the volunteers and their host community, the local staff was shaping development indirectly by making decisions about the site placement strategy. For example: not only where to place volunteers (what types of organizations and communities) but whether to continue placing volunteers in host organizations, which had already worked with a volunteer, whether to place more than one volunteer in a host community. These decisions could and did expand the development framework from the two-year service of the volunteer to four, six, to twelve years of Peace Corps partnership with the same host organization and even more years of Peace Corps presence in the same community.

THE IMPACT OF PEACE CORPS

The Volunteers: Bulgarized Development Workers

Peace Corps volunteers in Bulgaria completed their service with a Completion of Service (COS) Conference where they reviewed their two-year service, took their language proficiency interviews, and began to think about life after Peace Corps including employment, graduate school, continued service, and readjustment to American reality. I attended the COS Conference of the last B27 Legacy group in 2013, and on the agenda there was a session on “How

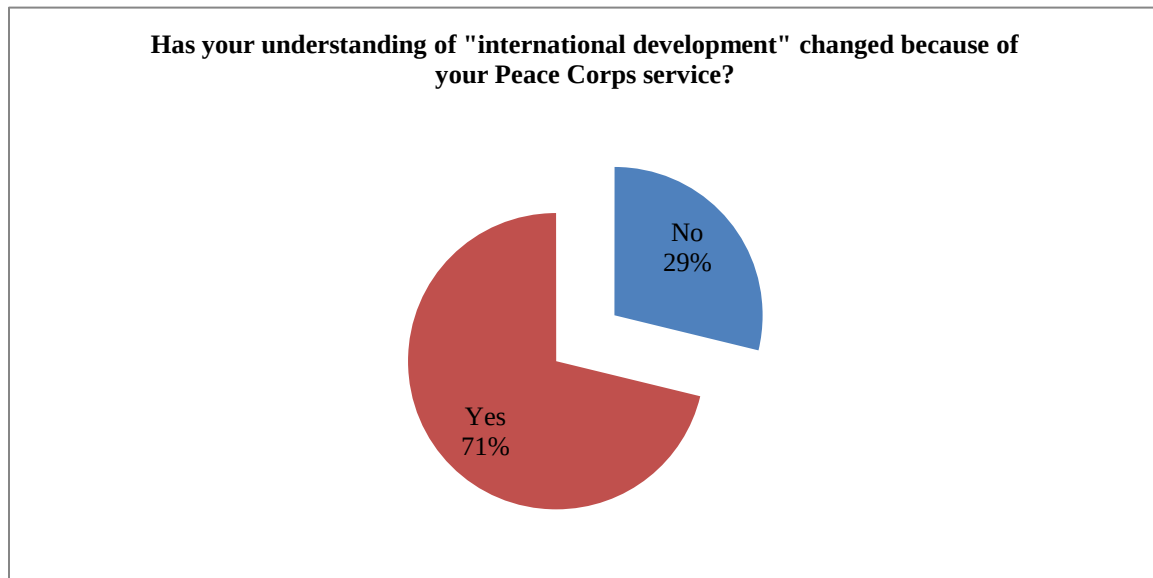
Bulgarized You Have Become.” The essence of the session was to reflect of how living and working in Bulgaria had changed the volunteers. Many of the essays in the Volunteer Legacy Book were also a reflection of the processes of Bulgarization: *“I learned the importance of having a sense of humor, being flexible and withholding judgment. I learned to embrace silence and explore nature. But most importantly, I saw the benefits of spending quality time with family and living in the moment”* (Kristi Brumley, B8 TEFL in PCBBTSLBC 2013:15). Those processes of new learning included ways of living and ways of thinking. For example, in the follow-up volunteer survey more than 70% of the volunteers believed that their understanding of "international development" changed because of their Peace Corps service (see Figure 67). The latter was most often in ways that has transformed them into critical global citizens:

*I frankly had no idea what it [development] meant before joining. I think like many volunteers, I went in with naive ideals and left a somewhat jaded RPCV, but then went on to study development economics and pursue a career in the field. It was an excellent face to face training on the pragmatic and often frustrating realities of development programming. **It was also a very good exploration of my own privilege as an American, which although I had been told about it many times throughout my education, was better able to experience the reality of it while abroad.*** (B25 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)

*I learned to see the immense value in cross-cultural exchange and the ripples, and then waves that an initial handful of solid friendships can make. **I also developed personally within Bulgarian culture and as an international citizen in ways I had not contemplated.*** Lastly, I now recognize how difficult it is to effect change as an outsider, how powerful corruption and social inertia can be, and how creating small changes can still be large triumphs. (B4 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)

*Living in a country that is developing as rapidly as Bulgaria has motivated me **to question the value of development, especially when it focuses solely on consumer capitalism.*** Today I still live in Bulgaria, and some of my work is with vulnerable populations, but I am not focused on development. (B26 TEFL Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)

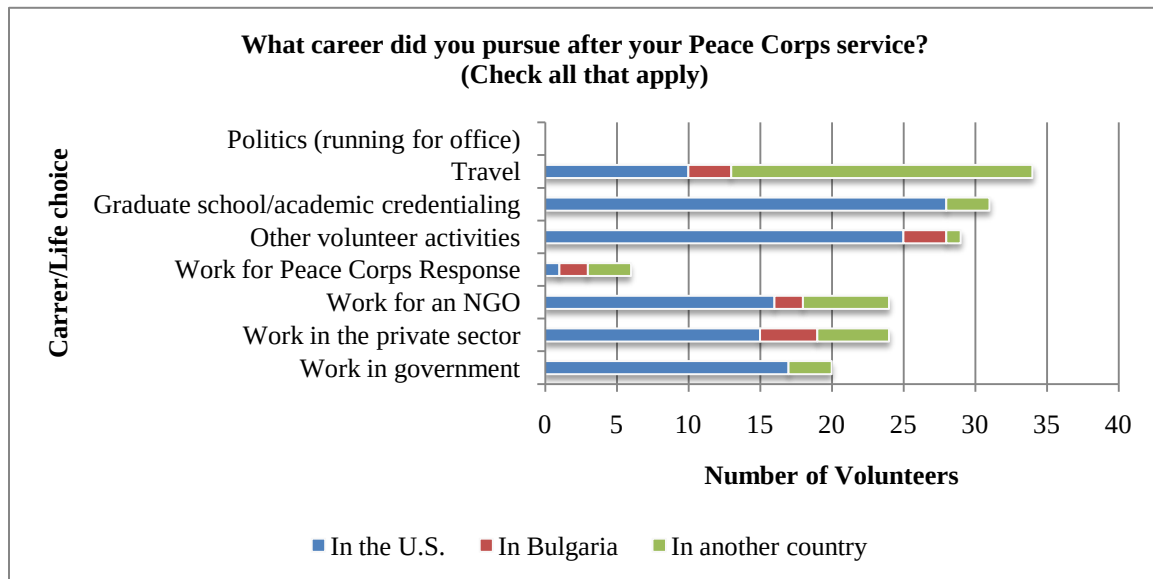
Figure 67: Volunteer Perceptions on the Impact of Peace Corps Service on Their Understanding of Development, n=52



The paradox of the Peace Corps development model then is that while joining the Peace Corps can support the creation of neoliberal subjectivities (intrinsic motivations to volunteer), the Peace Corps experience itself supports the creation of critical global citizens (volunteers who value mutual learning and equality). Although it is possible that the results are due to a selection bias – those volunteers who terminated their service may have left precisely because they were not comfortable in adopting a critical global subjectivity.

After their service, Peace Corps volunteers bring this critical global citizen perspective to a variety of places and contexts helping to spread counter-neoliberal globalization (See Figure 68). This includes the professional development field – “Work for an NGO” and “Work in government” - where volunteers bring an understanding about the limitations of the “mainstream development outlook”.

Figure 68: Volunteer Pursuits after Their Peace Corps Service, n=54



For example, volunteers acknowledged the limitations of approaching development at the macro level and especially development devoid of local cultural understanding:

*That direct human experience always flavors the way I think about things when I work now from a more macro level with other countries that I am not that familiar with things. **I know that there is so much that I don't know and that I can't possibly know.** ... it is just the day-to-day reality and a way that people think that is informed by their whole history and culture and can get a much better idea if you lived there for 2 years, still not fully obviously but very helpful. (B1 TEFL Volunteer, Interview, emphasis mine).*

Some volunteers articulated understandings that blended neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms by emphasizing the importance of mutual learning at the personal level (for the benefit of the individual):

*I think many Americans see "international development" as one sided--where we help other parts of the world become more developed; and see it as a broad and general idea applicable to a large group of people or places. This isn't always the case, especially with Peace Corps. "International development" can happen on an individual level. **I know that the Bulgarians I encountered each and every day had a positive impact on me that allowed me to grow and develop into who I am today, and I hope that I was able to have that same impact on their lives.** That is how I see "international development" after Peace Corps. (B26 YD Volunteer, Follow-up Survey, emphasis mine)*

Others emphasized the importance of community self-reliance, which intersects both notions of neoliberal development (self-sustainability) and post-development (localism):

*Yea, certainly. Peace Corps is very grassroots and sure influenced the way I think about things. Actually when thinking about how to help local community it is the idea of **first asking the local community what they would like to do** and trying to figure how an approach that's, doesn't require a lot of external resources but **relies on the resources of the community itself** rather than just pouring a lot of money into a situation, trying to figure **what a community can do on its own pace and with its own resources** to address specific issues. I think that's kind of a profound lesson that Peace Corps in offering solutions to local communities, says look for local resources, look for local approaches, **don't necessarily rely on somebody else to come and save the day**. (B9 TEFL Volunteer, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Altogether, the impact of Peace Corps on the volunteers was to support cultural relativist subjectivity (counter-neoliberal subjectivity), where people around the world are valued as equal human beings:

*To me the biggest and greatest thing that Peace Corps offers is that on one level people that are coming to Peace Corps sort of have that mentality, somewhat of being open to new people and new cultures but I just wish it was more people looked at that opportunity and just the exchange, **that we are all human beings** and regardless of color, or religion, or where we were born, we all bleed the same, mothers are all the same, they all love their kids, they ... I think that if more people could see that ...the world and especially Americans would be at a better place. (B25 COD Volunteer, Interview, emphasis mine)*

The latter, however, does not mean that the volunteers were oblivious to the continuing power differential between the U.S. and other countries, including Bulgaria. For example, they were approving of a Bulgarian Peace Corps sending volunteers abroad, including in the U.S., but they doubted that the Bulgarian government had the treasury to support such a program.

The Local Partners: Project Thinkers

When change in attitudes or behaviors was acknowledged, this was usually in cases where the volunteers and the local partners had transformed a collegial relationship into friendship, with the exception of the adoption of the project writing culture which while a change

in the way of thinking was perceived as the acquiring of a professional skill rather than a personal attitudinal change:

*Not only as an NGO representative but in terms of local community, local government understood and found out...what is the content an idea behind this type of program and **because it was really helpful: the first writers of projects I would say were...people around PCVs or PCVs themselves.** I would say that departments for project writing which 5 years ago boomed or developed some of the key people were more or less in one or another way worked with a PCV. (NGO Partner Gabrovo, Interview, emphasis mine)*

***I had no experience and knowledge about how projects should look like** then and how those are funded. [...] **The meetings, seminars with Peace Corps** for us that we about working with volunteers as well as about funding opportunities, this was, especially to me and my colleagues, it **opened a new mindset.** (NGO Partner Sredets and Burgas, Interview, emphasis mine)*

In general the expectation for changes in the mindset of the local people was that the volunteers will impact **the younger generation** rather than the local partners themselves:

*...and especially for Peace Corps approach because I have the feeling that this is the way actually things actually function in the USA in terms of local community development in some areas as far as I have some knowledge and have met some people from the NGO sector there and **I think this is very much related with the ...level and way of thinking like a citizen, one normal citizen in a democracy country.** There every citizen feels some responsibility to do something: this or another thing for the community itself. **So, this is for me is a very important thing especially for young people in the development of a country** because this is the generation that should normally carry the further development of the country **because for my mind probably my generation would not be so easy to change the mentality but for the middle and the younger generation these kind of examples I feel and I think that they were very helpful.** (NGO Partner Gabrovo, Interview, emphasis mine)*

For the majority of the local partners the main effect of interacting with PCVs was to affirm their confidence in their own capacity, as well as of Bulgaria's good developmental state:

***Yes, yes exactly this is what I liked it enriched me and I understood that our culture is at a good level,** I mean even culture of hygiene because this is a small country and we are a very oppressed people and with little self-esteem so I concluded that to the contrary we are very well educated, that we have a very good culture so the meeting with a different culture, the clash of two different cultures **because our and their culture is very different from what I saw in 1 year was enriching and now I have my confidence.** (NGO Partner Elhovo, Interview, emphasis mine)*

This quote also reflects the rhetoric of the local partners from the Legacy Celebration who also spoke of the PCVs helping them uncover their talents. In the latter sense, one staff member opined that Peace Corps/Bulgaria was an empowerment rather than a development organization:

From the perspective of time I see it as...local capacity encouragement organization because we've always had the knowledge and the skills here in Bulgaria and actually our education 30 or 40 years ago was at ...according to the world standards, so we were not in need of development but we were in need and still are in need of ...empowerment. So I would say that Peace Corps is an empowerment organization. It gives us strength in our own skills and abilities. (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)

The Staff: The Best “Job” You will ever Love

For the US staff, the experience of working for Peace Corps was very similar to that of the volunteers and the local partners: it changed their understanding of international development and the importance of community participation in the development process.

Oh, absolutely! Profound! Profound impact! Not only because of the experience itself but the experience juxtaposed to development agencies and how they approach issues.... I think that, you know, Peace Corps experience of knowing in many ways and in understanding more profoundly the culture in which you are living and then applying that to principles of international development. You are always going to be looking at does it make sense at the local level, typically where things are implemented as opposed to as we know...the world littered with development projects that didn't take into consideration whether anyone actually wanted them or not. Typically the Peace Corps view will start with why do you want it, who wants it and I brought that to my job now even in conservation and animal welfare realizing that unless the local communities see conservation as having value to them, it will fail and poaching will continue, encroachment and habitat destruction and environmental degradation will continue. So in my own work, now focusing on communities and livelihoods have become huge issue, again SBD...the project we have in Malawi incorporating fish farm and local agriculture and water and solar, all in order to put up a fence so elephants can be safe and people can be safe on the other side. It has had a profound influence on me. (Country Director, Interview, emphasis mine)

For the local Bulgarian staff, the impact was both professional and personal. Professionally, the staff also recognized that Peace Corps shaped their understanding of

development, their understanding of their own culture through working with Americans, learning more about Bulgaria, while travelling in the country to develop new sites and developing their management skills, and ultimately their careers:

*I think it is difficult to describe in two words but for me personally it was a very big change, a very big change, in terms of development, in terms of capacities, in terms of management skills, in terms of recognizing international development, recognizing international resources. **For me, that was very big asset to my further career** because after that I was a program manager and a team leader of a very huge USAID funded program: the so called international twin-cities program. It was a real pleasure for me. So, Peace Corps gave me a lot. (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)*

More often the BG staff spoke of their personal development and compared their experience to that of the local partners. For example, how Peace Corps opened their eyes and made them more tolerant and accepting of diversity, and interested in volunteering, which in turn has impacted their family and friends:

*I am **more tolerant and more open to diversity** because I have worked with so many diverse volunteers in terms of sexual orientation, in terms of race, age, whatever, so I think I can work with everyone and I know that everyone no matter what their difference should be respected and should be treated the same way. And this is something that I not only for me but this is the way how I talk to my kids, they are absolutely aware of all these issues and they have had the same approach. so it has influenced not only me but also my family. **Also approach to voluntarism, to being open, to get involved in different activities that will help someone.** Again, not only my family but my inner circle of friends, and...for me it was a unique experience and I am thankful to Peace Corps for all these 13 years. (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Some mentioned specific American ways of thinking and doing that they had acquired through working with the US staff such as the value of positivism and personal responsibility:

*Azzedine Downes was the director. So, it was a real pleasure to work with him as I mentioned he is...with very strong leadership skills, brilliant person, a brilliant manager. He was really very good at motivating the staff and even during this 1 and a half year that I worked with him I think that we learned the most interesting lessons because it is **the most important thing is to change the mentality.** Because our mentality was post-socialist it was normal that we didn't have the mentality that it different from ours and he taught us and **we learned that we need to look at the glass of water that it is not half empty that it is half full.** And this thing I remember until today. (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)*

*Yes! To a great extent. The same which goes to the Bulgarian counterparts goes to us as staff. We were in the beginning of democracy here, we didn't know anything about the world. I was in my 30s when the revolution started and we have to start from "0" and Peace Corps was a window, big, large window first of all to the freedom, to self-knowledge...and to ...**one of my biggest lessons from Peace Corps is that mistakes are part of the learning process. It was so new for me. I was so afraid of making mistakes.** All my generation is paralyzed by not doing mistakes and I will never forget Rick, my first boss who said. I did some mistake and he said "Good! Now you know how to do it!" and I suddenly realized this. This is such a shift in attitude. Otherwise you won't be able to do it. Now you know how to do it well because...and the other I go to him and say "OK can you do it" and he says "Yes, of course, go ahead" and take responsibility. I like it. [SD: this empowerment. Did you feel empowered?] **Absolutely because he gives you the freedom and at the same time you feel responsible. This is such an affective and powerful combination: freedom and responsibility.** Still, it is lacking in Bulgaria, you know. (BG Program & Training Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Mostly, the BG staff described their time at Peace Corps/Bulgaria as their most meaningful professional experience. The latter was attributed to their strong belief in the mission of the organization, the supportive work environment that blended the best of the American and Bulgarian cultures, and the joy of being part of a community of people who had fun together. These experiences made it very difficult for them to transition to a new place:

*Oh, absolutely! **Really, the best job probably that I will ever have in life.** The only challenge comes with the effect after that. I am still looking for something similar. Because that's where I was really was very good at. Where I felt comfortable on personal and professional level. **I believe in the goals 100% and I was doing my job with such a pride and with such a passion and the problem come when you need to find another job.** I know...my mind knows that...I register it that there isn't another Peace Corps. Probably there will be something again good but it will be different. But intuitionally, I am still looking for it and that's a problem because you need to accept it and just to say "that was it" but it's difficult. It's just... adjustment for us after that is much more difficult just because it was worthy, it was nice. It was very intense but worthy for everybody involved in the process. (BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine)*

***Peace Corps was like a bubble...**maybe because of its mission, the way it is organized, the way it operates, the mutual respect, value of all different opinions, considering different ideas, coming to mutual understanding in taking decision is something that is not typical for the local environment still. **So, in this regard, this makes us sort of ...inapplicable to the local, how to say, work market.**...if you understand what I mean. (BG APCD - Programming & Training, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Having Americanized, the BG staff had found themselves in positions similar to the volunteers, who faced the challenge of working in environments, which often lacked optimism, respect for difference of opinions and cultural diversity, and resources/organizational culture for staff development like Peace Corps/Bulgaria did:

*As far as policy towards the staff I think that Peace Corps was unique in the sense that **a lot of opportunities were given to us**. ...the whole policy overall of having teambuilding activities really made us develop a lot as a team and I think I would be, I would be right to say that we were not just staffers, we were family. (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview, emphasis mine)*

Most of the Bulgarian local staff interviewees continued their careers with international organizations in Bulgaria and abroad, which provided a similar if not the same kind of “bubble” environment. They all realized that they would have a hard time finding another work environment that was not only as supportive but that had literally evolved into a family:

*I would be right to say that we **were not just staffers, we were family**. And I know that this slogan is one that is always with PCVs but it is in a way like that. One of my former colleagues is the godmother to my child. I am godmother of another's child. I was maid of honor to another colleague of mine and there are a lot of interconnections there that we value ourselves as persons not just as professionals and we are friends. Rarely could we say something bad about someone else. (BG External Resources Coordinator, Interview, emphasis mine)*

This explains why today (as of 2016), three years after the closure of the program the BG staff continues to meet regularly for staff reunions, not just the program but the medical and administrative staff. Their commitment to the mission of the organization, especially of those who had stayed until the end, continues through their support of the CORPluS Foundation, now in its fifth year, mainly as volunteers - judges and announcers - for the local, regional and national competitions (the Spelling Bee and the Creative Writing Competition). The CORPluS Foundation also serves as the new “home” office for visiting Bulgaria RPCVs and former staff.

CONCLUSION

In lieu of a conclusion for this chapter I will discuss the differences between the Peace Corps Development Model according to the volunteers, the local partners, and the local staff in contrast to the official model based on the interaction between the Core Peace Corps Goals outlined in Chapter 3 Figure 10. As a collective, the volunteers emphasized the importance of cross-cultural exchange and learning (Goals 2 and 3) and added transfer of attitudes (ways of thinking and being) and relationship building to the development goal of transfer of skills and capacity building (Goal 1). The latter was also a two-directional interaction with both the local partners and the volunteers obtaining new technical knowledge and skills. The volunteers felt that they finished their service with better understanding of themselves (Reverse Goal 3) and as Bulgarianized critical global citizens ready to enter the professional development field. See Figure 69 for an illustration of the Peace Corps model according to the volunteers.

The local partners had a view of the Peace Corps development model that was similar to that of the volunteers (see Figure 70). Only instead of relationship building they had added resource mobilization to the development goal and they associated the transfer of attitudes with the younger population in the country (Goal 1). They also clarified Goal 3 to mean a “positive” understanding of the local people. At the end, the transformative effect on them was that they had gained a better understanding of themselves (Reverse Goal 2) and felt empowered in their own knowledge and skills.

The program staff also saw both Goal 1 and Goal 3 as two-way, not one-way interactions (see Figure 71). In addition, they emphasized that Goal 1 was interdependent on both Goals 2 and 3 and not only on Goal 2. Also, Goal 1 was clarified to include a transfer of attitudes in addition to a transfer of skills and capacity building but not as resource development, Goal 2 was

understood as a positive understanding of Americans, and Goal 3 was clarified to the local people as different from spying. At the end both, the local partners and the volunteers have changed their mentality and improved their skills with the volunteers becoming Bulgarized critical global citizens ready to join the professional development field, while the local partners had achieved a sense of empowerment, while the local Bulgarian staff has Americanized.

When all three perspectives are considered, the Peace Corps Development model is transformed from a mix of one one-directional (Goal 1) and two two-directional goals (Goals 2 and 3) to a model based on complete reciprocity for all three goals and the embedding of the development goal in the cross-cultural exchange goals (see Figure 72). In essence, the model has been transformed from a mix of technical assistance plus cross-cultural exchange into a development through collective learning (Naderveen 2010). The deployment of the Peace Corps development model in Bulgaria then exemplifies Wilson's (2007) call for re-inventing technical assistance/technical collaboration as an Innovation System where new knowledge is produced out of difference (i.e. learning with) in addition to recycling what is already known (i.e. learning from).

Figure 69: Diagram of the Peace Corps Development Model according to the Volunteers

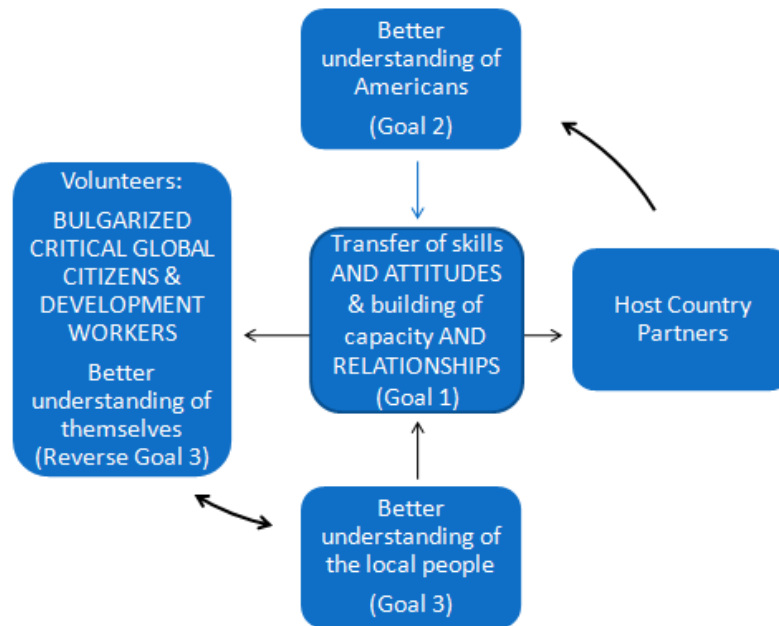


Figure 70: Diagram of the Peace Corps Development Model according to the Local Partners

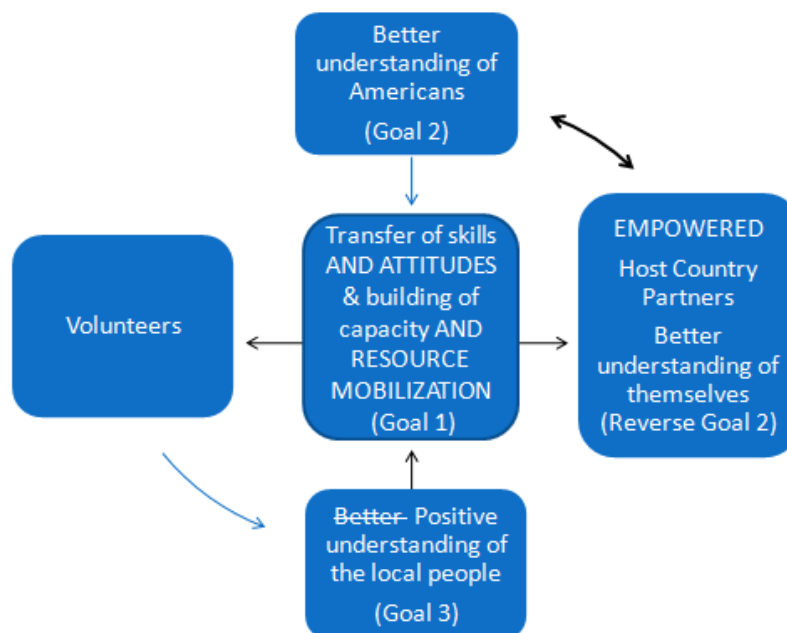


Figure 71: Diagram the Peace Corps Development Model according to the Program Staff

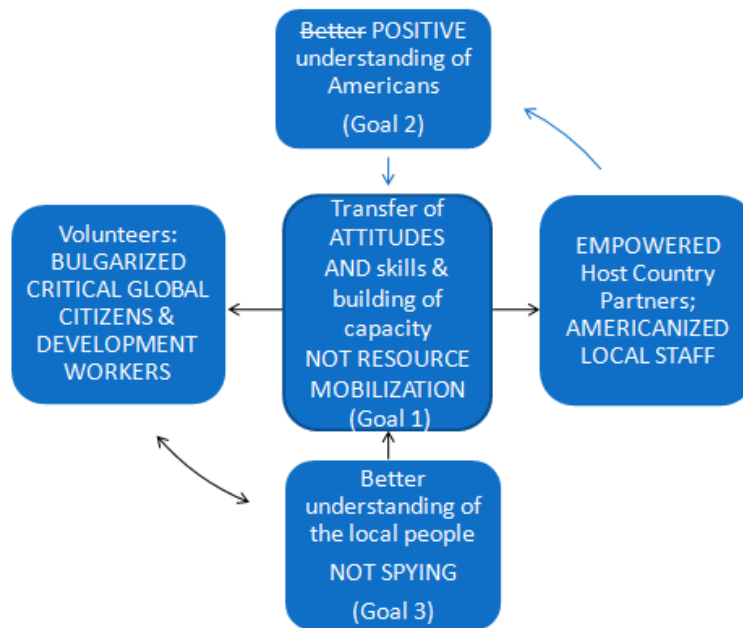
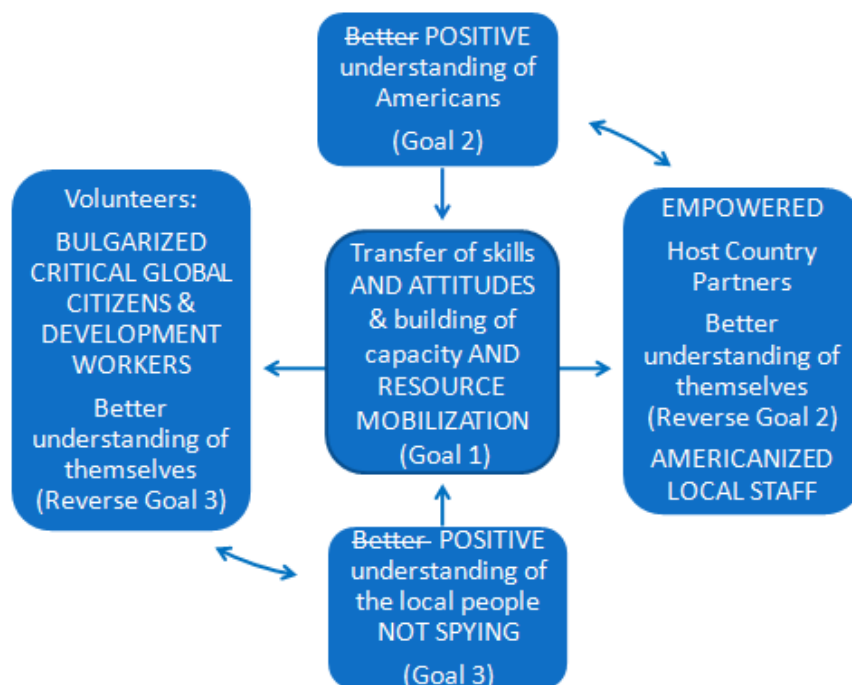


Figure 72: Diagram of the On-the-Ground Peace Corps Development Model



CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVES

This dissertation set out to investigate the role of international development volunteering in the context of a post-socialist transition to complex interdependence through analyses of the “discourses” on the role and impact of Peace Corps’ development activities in Bulgaria. My contention was that contrary to other research that posit international development volunteering as a channel for the transmission of the dominant neoliberal discourse and practices and the creation of neoliberal subjects (Baillie and Laurie 2011, , Georgeou 2012, Georgeou and Engel 2011, Lyons et al. 2012, Mostafanezhad 2014, Nihei 2010Vrasti 2012,; Vrasti and Montison 2014), these types of practices are embedded in more complex dynamics that allow them to perform the development narrative in ways that simultaneously promote and challenge processes of neoliberalization. Therefore, the main objective of the dissertation was to explain Peace Corps as a contradictory development model including by identifying and understanding how neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms coexist and with what implications.

In my conceptual framework I showed how the duality of volunteering, expressed in diverging motivations (altruistic and instrumental) and types of volunteering (social service provision and political/social activism), creates mutually constitutive or dialectic rather than opposing cycles of neoliberalization and counter-neoliberalization through volunteering. These cycles include specific, yet interpenetrating, neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms for social transformation through volunteering that I identified from a review of the literature which intersects studies on neoliberalism(s) and volunteering. For my framework, I adopted a multi-dimensional definition of neoliberalism as a political project/ideology, policy, and

governmentality. In turn, these dimensions, translated into neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms through volunteering around the themes of values/goals, practices, and subjectivity. The theoretical framework was embedded in an analysis of the regional post-socialist context, of the local Bulgarian context, and of Peace Corps's organizational context.

The limited research on international development volunteering in a post-socialist context, and in Bulgaria, showed that these types of organizations were seen as a means to support a substantive change in the understanding of the meaning of volunteering (how it differs from obligatory volunteering during state socialism) and through it, of the relationship between society (the government) and the individual. The latter meant a rethinking of social welfare from an issue of rights to an issue of needs that in turn could justify neoliberal reforms that required the withdrawal of the state from areas of social provision. In Bulgaria, IMF/World Bank neoliberal structural reforms were implemented on and off until 1997 when the IMF created a currency board regime and the country launched the EU assessing process. Bulgaria is also among the countries that have sustained the adoption of extreme neoliberal reforms outside of what the EU has advised (Appel and Orenstein 2015). The few studies on attitudes towards volunteering in Bulgaria are also indicative of neoliberal structuring of the volunteer sector in the country (i.e. government outsourcing of social services).

The analysis of Peace Corps' Core Goals showed that *Peace Corps' development model incorporates a variety of conflicting development approaches.* Goal 1 – to help the people of interested countries to meet their needs for trained men and women - is specified as technical assistance through transfer of skills (modernization theory), capacity building (human development), local community development (alternative development), and public diplomacy (Peace Corps as an instrument of U.S. foreign policy) which are all susceptible to neoliberal

styles of development. But Goal 2 and Goal 3 – to help promote better understanding of Americans and of other people about each other – are the cross-cultural exchange piece of Peace Corps that should support the formation of counter-neoliberal subjectivity. Specifically, *Peace Corps’ decision to expand in Eastern Europe showed that the deployment of Peace Corps in the region aimed to assist with processes of neoliberal modernization (Westernization)*. These processes were initially articulated as assistance with the dual goals of building a democracy and a market economy and later as assistance with integration in EU, NATO and other Western structures.

SUMMARY OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS

The fact that the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program was one of the longest operating in Eastern Europe (1991 through 2013), and especially that it remained open after Bulgaria joined the EU in 2007, reflected (1) the strong support and interest in the program in Bulgaria, (2) the ability of the local staff to generate strategies that made the best match between the profile of the volunteers and the changing needs in the country, and (3) the U.S. donor culture of “cherry-picking” (where development assistance is granted to those that are most skilled at framing their problems but who are not necessarily in most need). Both the opening and the closure of Peace Corps/Bulgaria were initiated by the U.S. Government, first in the context of the U.S. foreign policy to support the new geo-political orientation (inclusion) of the former Eastern Bloc countries to the West. Then, the decision to exit the country was made in the context of U.S. budget constraints following the 2008-2010 Global Recession.

In 22 years, Peace Corps/Bulgaria developed a significant presence in the country with a total of 1,297 Americans having lived or served in 80% of the municipalities in the country.

During those years volunteers worked in a total of five different sector projects: (1) Education or Teaching English, (2) Business Development (Small Business Development and Community Economic Development), (3) Environmental Training and Management, (4) Youth Development, and (5) Community and Organizational Development. In addition, between 2010 and 2013, a small number of volunteers (1% of all volunteers) came to serve under the short-term Peace Corps Response Program.

The analysis of the public and private discourses on the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria showed differences both between and within discourses. The public discourses reflected the language of neoliberalism to a much greater extent compared to the private discourses, especially in the U.S. Government/Peace Corps rhetoric directed at the American public (Congress). In public discourses aimed at the Bulgarian and American public the role of Peace Corps/Bulgaria in the post-socialist transition was seen as “significant”, while it was regarded as only “modest” in the public discourse aimed at the new volunteers. Overall, the role of Peace Corps/Bulgaria in the public discourses also changed from a focus on building the economy in the first decade (1991 to 2002) to a focus on building the civil society (democracy) and EU integration in the second decade (2003 to 2013). In the private discourses, perceptions on the impact of Peace Corps/Bulgaria among the volunteers, the program staff, and the local partners, ranged from significant to none with the majority of volunteers, program staff, and local partners acknowledging an indirect effect on the post-socialist transformation rather than a direct impact on the process (decision-making).

Furthermore, the goal of EU integration was articulated differently in the public and private discourses. In the public discourse of the U.S. government EU integration equaled Westernization, while in the public discourse of the Bulgarian government EU integration

equaled modernization. The volunteers and the local partners acknowledged their role in sharing/spreading Western practices as part of the cross-cultural goals of Peace Corps.

Differences between discourses were largely a function of processes of construction and reconstruction of the public images of different actors for different audiences. Differences between the public and private discourses, in particular, show that the motivations of people who worked for and with Peace Corps did not necessarily reflect official statements of the organization.

There were discrepancies between the descriptions of Peace Corps/Bulgaria activities in public documents (public discourses) and the perceptions of Peace Corps/Bulgaria actors about the nature of those activities (private discourses). All actors – volunteers, program staff, and local partners - shared an expectation that certain sector projects would exemplify neoliberal mechanisms (SBD and CED), other sector projects would exemplify counter-neoliberal mechanisms (ENV and YD), and yet others would be neither (TEFL). My analysis, however, revealed that all sector projects had at least one stated neoliberal goal and one or more counter-neoliberal or a mixed goal (a goal that combined a neoliberal and a counter-neoliberal mechanism). Similarly, the description of activities under each sector project included initiatives that illustrated the working of neoliberal, counter-neoliberal, and mixed mechanisms.

Similar dynamics were identified for the Peace Corps/Bulgaria's agency-wide initiatives and external resource programs. Agency wide-initiatives – promotion of information and communication technologies (ICT), women in development/gender and development (WID/GAD), prevention of human trafficking (ATIP), prevention of HIV/AIDS, promotion of volunteerism and service (V2), and the World Wise School (WWS) correspondence match program for students - were designed in ways that should have supported the formation of

counter-neoliberal subjectivity. The actual implementation of volunteer assignments and agency-wide initiatives, however, was supported through two external resource programs that financed small community projects – SPA and PCPP - which exemplified the neoliberal governance funding regime.

Estimating the prevalence of neoliberal, counter-neoliberal, and mixed initiatives was not part of the research, although data from the Volunteer Follow-up Survey indicates that more volunteers were involved in mixed activities, compared to counter-neoliberal, and neoliberal activities alone (see Figure 57). In this sense, *the deployment of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria development model in Bulgaria was characterized by the mixing (or parallel working) of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms, as well as the creation of mixed mechanisms* (activities that combined neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms).

Peace Corps/Bulgaria's Mechanisms for Neoliberal Transformation

Below is a summary of the main types of mechanisms for neoliberal transformation that were identified in the analysis. They fall under three main categories: (1) promoting neoliberal values/goals; (2) conducting neoliberal practices, and (3) creating neoliberal subjectivities. The distinction is conceptual because in reality these mechanisms interpenetrate one another. The category of 'neoliberal values/goals' is least distinct and functions as an enabler of neoliberal practices:

1. Promoting Neoliberal Values/Goals:

- The value of *self-interest* underlines cases of instrumental/political use of the volunteers by the local partners, perceptions of the volunteers as secret agents by some local partners, and perceptions of the volunteers as U.S. public diplomats by some volunteers.

In contrast, in the Peace Corps/Bulgaria's public discourse to the new volunteers and the Bulgarian Government discourse, the volunteers were seen as public diplomats of both the U.S. and Bulgaria (value of mutuality);

- The value of *competition* was embedded in at least two legacy programs: the Spelling Bee Competition and the Creative English Writing Competition;
- The goal of the neoliberal project, of *global free market*, were articulated in the Peace Corps public discourse directed at the American public (Congress). Very few of the volunteers used the language of "free" market economy when discussing the role of Peace Corps in supporting the transition goal of building a market economy;
- The value of *personal responsibility* was articulated most widely. It was present in the Peace Corps public discourse directed at the new volunteers and in the private discourses by the volunteers and the local program staff.

2. Conducting Neoliberal Practices:

- The value of personal responsibility and self-sufficiency translated into volunteer initiatives involving *individual empowerment projects*. Some examples include an SBD project for teaching unemployed women how to start their own business, a CED job training program on computers, cooking, cosmetology, and clothing design for children leaving institutionalized care. YD volunteers also organized programs to provide individual leadership, life skills, and career skills to young people from diverse backgrounds;
- There is evidence that some volunteer activities facilitated the implementation of the *neoliberal policies of liberalization, privatization, and decentralization of government services* especially through the SBD Project Enterprise. However, while the focus of

SBD volunteers was on individual entrepreneurs, they could and did provide assistance to collective businesses such as agricultural cooperatives (counter-neoliberal mechanism).

The latter illustrates the parallel application of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms;

- YD volunteers participated in processes of *welfare privatization* directly and indirectly. Directly by assisting with the transition from institutional to foster family based system in the country and indirectly by working with host organizations that provided state-delegated activities (social services). In the latter sense, *Peace Corps/Bulgaria supported the establishment of domestic voluntary sector that serves as an extension of the government*. In contrast, when volunteers visited institutions for child care to assist in the care of the children (alone and/or with their students) or when they were placed to work in such institutions (i.e. boarding schools for truants), those instances exemplified volunteering as a partner of the state (counter-neoliberal mechanism). Participation in welfare privatization and support for government welfare institutions is another example of the parallel application of neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms within a sector project;
- Volunteers from all projects helped introduce *neoliberal governance practices*. For example a CED volunteer developed a market-oriented approach to the management of a local public theater. Other examples include the *instrumental use of culture* as a resource in marketing (i.e. TEFL project for the revival of local music traditions to enhance a town's image as a tourism destination) and the *instrumental use of nature* as a resource for eco-tourism by ENV, CED, and COD volunteers.

3. **Creating Neoliberal Subjectivity:** Volunteers supported the creation of neoliberal subjectivities in the process of implementing neoliberal practices. The introduction and teaching of the Junior Achievement curriculum in the country by SBD and TEFL volunteers, was most often recognized as a tool for the creation of neoliberal subjectivity in students (and teachers).

Peace Corps/Bulgaria's Mechanisms for Counter-Neoliberal Transformation

The main types of mechanisms for counter-neoliberal transformation that were identified in the analysis mirror those for neoliberal transformation. Thus they fall under similar categories: (1) promoting counter-neoliberal values (or goals); (2) conducting counter-neoliberal neoliberal practices, and (3) creating counter-neoliberal subjectivities:

1. Promoting Counter-Neoliberal Values/Goals:

- The counter-neoliberal *values of mutuality and cooperation* were articulated very strongly in both the public and private discourses on the role of Peace Corps in Bulgaria. They were the foundation for the legal agreements between the Bulgarian and the U.S. Governments. The value of cooperation was also embedded in the terms of the volunteer service, which required that each volunteer worked in partnership with a local counterpart. Then, according to the volunteers and the local staff Peace Corps/Bulgaria's development model was expressed and practiced as a participatory community driven approach, which also promoted the value and practice of cooperation.
- Within the counter-neoliberal mechanisms, I place the shift in the U.S. Government (Peace Corps) public discourse to the American public (Congress) from a focus on building the market economy to a focus on *building a democracy and civil society*, due to

the emphasis on increasing citizens' participation in decision-making at all levels and sectors of society (after 2002). All actors also agreed that the volunteers supported democracy indirectly by working with NGOs, serving as role models of citizens of a democratic society, and by facilitating *democratic-decision making practices* in their classrooms and initiatives.

2. Conducting Counter-Neoliberal Practices:

- While the discourse on the *values of social justice and equality* was minimal, I found that those values were embedded in Peace Corps/Bulgaria's strategy to place volunteers to *work with isolated rural communities and disadvantaged groups* (especially after 2002). The paradox is that while in 2007 the growing social inequalities in the country, which prompted the change in placement strategy were seen as a result of the pursuit of "rapid development," in the 1991 CBJ outlook "rapid change" was the need or goal that Peace Corps was called to assist with;
- Some of the agency-wide-initiatives (ATIP, WID/GAD, HIV/AIDS) and two of the legacy organizations (the GLOW association and the Areté Youth Foundation) engaged in *political activism aligned with counter-neoliberal movements*, which aimed to expand the political, economic, and social rights of victims of trafficking, minority (Roma) groups, women, and people with HIV/AIDS;
- The ENV sector project focused specifically on issues of *environmental justice and environmentalism* (environmental political activism);
- Volunteers from all sector projects engaged in projects that focused on *collective social empowerment*. This was expected given that Peace Corps' public discourse about the role of the volunteers was that they contribute to community development. Examples

included working with people with lower/unequal status in the mainstream Bulgarian society such as children and youth, smaller/rural communities, minority groups, and disadvantaged groups (people with disabilities, the elderly, etc.):

...we often deal with the disenfranchised, the minorities, people who don't have a voice or a under-represented or... and I think that it is important that there is somebody else that does care, who will identify with them and be part of that. And this changes the volunteer too. It is easy to become part of corporate America and not have that social responsibility.... That's one of the big impacts of Peace Corps on the volunteers themselves. (US APCD - Programming & Training, emphasis mine)

The perception in the quote is that working with disadvantaged groups while empowering the groups, also had the effect of supporting the creation of counter-neoliberal subjectivity on the part of the volunteers.

3. **Creating Counter-Neoliberal Subjectivity:** Volunteers supported the creation of counter-neoliberal subjectivity through their counter-neoliberal practices. Activities that promoted appreciation of different cultural values and lifestyles (i.e. diversity trainings) through classroom and extracurricular activities, as well as activities that increased global awareness (i.e. Earth Day, World Environmental Day and World Water Day celebrations) were most supportive of the formation of critical global citizens.

Peace Corps/Bulgaria's Mixed Mechanisms

Mixed mechanisms combined a neoliberal value, practice or subjectivity with a counter-neoliberal value, practice or subjectivity. *The most significant mixed practice that was mentioned in all discourses and by all actors concerned the adoption of **project design and management (PDM)** skills by the volunteers and their counterparts.* In Chapter 8, I explained how Peace Corps/Bulgaria's PDM model combined both neoliberal and counter-neoliberal mechanisms. Many of the local partners credited the volunteers with being the first to introduce this

management framework at their workplace and Peace Corps with helping them both gain and practice those skills through its trainings and by coaching the volunteer-local partner project teams through the application and management of Peace Corps sponsored grants (SPA and PCPP projects).

The effect of the adoption of the PDM/grant writing culture in Bulgaria was the creation of neoliberal subjectivities, especially when the focus was on grant writing alone. The latter involved not so much a shift from civil society (citizens) to consumer society (clients), although the SBD project used precisely these terms to describe the interaction between the volunteers and the local people (their clients), but a *shift to a project society* with people describing their work as “working on projects” rather than having jobs or careers in particular sectors.¹⁰³ In a post-socialist context a neoliberal governance regime around projects with measurable goals and results is reminiscent of the state-socialist regime and its 5-year plans. In fact, according to one of the interviewees Peace Corps’ agency-wide move towards performance accountability was perceived by the local staff from post-socialist countries as precisely that: a return to central planning.

*I remember at the beginning when we started when we were doing those PSTs and site-identification, site-development.... It was mostly what my vision is what I wanted to do. We had some general discussion but all the decisions were my decisions. Then step-by-step when the organizations, cleared its priorities, its focus, then everything became more structured. Even **the year before I was leaving, it became so centralized that the headquarters started trainings and I think they continued with that... like providing concrete sessions, or courses with ready topics, ready session plans and people were supposed to reach exactly that** which again I remember I attended a conference in Albania it was for the training managers and we didn’t had a training manager already because we were closing. I was sent there and I remember that the tensions during the training between the training managers and the DC staff, because they said ok, because these were **people from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet republics. “It is so centralized, we were trying to escape from that... and we are going back to that!”** So I don’t know if this is good or bad cause I did not experience it probably more guidance*

¹⁰³ During my field work in Bulgaria whenever I asked people “what do you do?” they would say “I am working on projects” rather than I am a teacher, or I work for a non-profit, etc.

was good but ... there should be... somehow so that the locals should be able to.... Take into consideration the local conditions, the specific situations and to be given the opportunity to modify... to ... when they have to apply those trainings to modify them based on the local conditions and There were some Like...serious guidance that you should do them that way and I don't know what happened after that. (BG Program Manager, emphasis mine)

Here, neoliberal governance (governance based on performance accountability) supports the creation of hierarchal management that limits democratic decision-making in ways that are similar to the central planning in a Soviet state socialist state. Therefore, much like the paradox of the implementation of statewide neoliberal reforms was that it required a strong authoritarian state (Bockman 2011), the implementation of a neoliberal governance regime by an organization requires the centralization of decision-making.

The general trend in the private discourses was that the US Staff was more accepting of the idea that Peace Corps promoted processes of neoliberalization (neoliberal development), followed by the BG staff, the volunteers, and the local partners. Moreover, while the notion of neoliberal development was associated with both positive and negative value judgments, all actors were approving of Peace Corps' efforts in counter-neoliberalization (alternative development).

The analysis of the Peace Corps Development model and the discourses about its deployment in Bulgaria identified a *discrepancy between the theoretical model and it's on-the ground manifestation*. Theoretically, and in the Peace Corps public discourse to the American public, the model supported a one-way transfer of skills plus capacity building and a two-way cross-cultural exchange. In all private discourses and some of the public discourses there was an acknowledgement that the transfer of skill and capacity building was also a two-way exchange with both the local partners and the volunteers acquiring/developing technical skills as part of their Peace Corps training and in the process of living and working together.

Some noted that the expectations for two-way learning exchange translated into volunteers joining Peace Corps for instrumental rather than altruistic motivations. Volunteers and US program staff (also RPCVs) were most likely to perceive the latter as a process of professionalization and commodification of the Peace Corps service itself (which are examples of neoliberal governance that enables the creation of neoliberal subjectivities). Other program staff and volunteers believed that by the end of their Peace Corps service the volunteers had transformed into critical global citizens who value mutual learning and equality. *The paradox of the Peace Corps development model then is that while joining the Peace Corps is believed to support the creation of neoliberal subjectivities, the Peace Corps experience itself is believed to support the creation of critical global citizens.*

Both the volunteers and the local partners reported experiencing reverse cross-cultural exchange meaning that they improved their understanding of each other as well as of themselves, in addition to acquiring or improving their technical skills. The on-the-ground Peace Corps development model is therefore reciprocal in all of its dimensions and supports development as collective learning (see Figure 72). More importantly, in the process of those exchanges new contradictory post-socialist subjectivities had emerged: **Bulgarized and Americanized PDM Thinking Critical Global Citizens.**

The main reason for the discrepancy between the theoretical and the on-the-ground development model, however, while an expression of the different motivations by different members of the partnerships structure, was also a reflection of the Peace Corps' structure. The latter is characterized by a significant degree of freedom (or independence) in how the volunteers can approach their partnerships with the local people. As one volunteer, now working for a development foundation, explained:

*Peace Corps [...] even from a management perspective it is not a very controlled entity... you know [...] It has a mission, the sort of three-part mission to share culture, to bring back other culture and to help but that's a very broad mission. It doesn't say a lot. And then you have the fact that there are different country offices that are impacting this sort of interpreting the mission according to their perspective and their lens, and then you have a group of a 100 kids who just got out of college and they channel sort of specific ideas about what Peace Corps means for them and what are they going to do, and then they disperse and they are impacted by the community, and I would say that at the end of the day it had watered down, not in a bad way but in a very organic way, and it is not very controlled. So, even if somebody in D.C., let's say, decided I wanted this particular thing to happen with Peace Corps, **given the current structure and the way it is [...] it would be very difficult to actually make that happen because everybody is doing basically their own thing from what I can see.** (B9 TEFL Volunteer, Interview, emphasis mine)*

The variety of conflicting dynamics make Peace Corps/Bulgaria a case of a contradictory “real utopia”: a development model that simultaneously promotes, conforms to, and resists processes of neoliberalization. The mixed mechanisms, especially Peace Corps’s capacity to turn people into “PDM Thinking Critical Global Citizen,” represent the kind of hybrid forms of social empowerment that hold the potential to facilitate a symbiotic transformation of the current global order towards a more equitable world based on the values of social and environmental justice rather than market rationality. Such transformations serve the interest of the power elites in the short-term, while shifting the balance of power towards broader empowerment in the long-term.

In my case study, there was a shared understanding between all actors – the volunteers, the local staff, and the local partners - that all people have the capacity to learn and participate in development as collective learning. At the same time there was also recognition that not all governments have the resources to support such programs. This notion came forcefully when actors were asked if Bulgaria could/should have a similar to the Peace Corps international volunteer program. In the latter sense, while international development volunteer programs can and do promote the formation of counter-neoliberal subjectivities that will shape futures, they exist because of and to symbolize the inequality between states in the global order.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The newest Peace Corps logo reads: “Live, learn and work with a community overseas. Be a volunteer.” This means that there is an acknowledgement that the Peace Corps development model has transitioned from technical assistance to technical cooperation. Given the results of my analysis of the deployment of the Peace Corps model in Bulgaria, perhaps it is time for Peace Corps to revisit its Core Peace Corps Goals and embrace a new development perspective that reflects the development process on the ground. Instead of the three goals that reflect modernization and neoliberal approaches, Peace Corps can adopt a new goal that replaces the existing three goals with a new goal that moves them toward development as collective learning (i.e. Peace Corps Goal: to provide opportunities for development as collective learning to interested countries, communities, and individuals).

FUTURE RESEARCH

Follow-up research on this case study can investigate ***processes of construction, durability, and consequences of creating contradictory subjectivities (PDM Thinking Critical Global Citizens)*** through Peace Corps service. Here, the notion of “complicity as infiltration” developed by Daza (2012) also an RPCV and an anthropology professor can be a starting point. Research can focus on assessing changes in subjectivity before and after service (for the volunteers), employment (for the staff), and partnership (for the local partners) and especially on how volunteers, staff, and local partners continue to shape development practices and discourses after the completion of their service, employment, and partnership.

At the organizational level, ***a follow-up study of the activities of Peace Corps/Bulgaria’s legacy organizations*** can assess the extent to which those organizations enable processes of

neoliberal and counter-neoliberal transformations of their own. Specifically, my analysis of the perceptions of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria's development model indicated that the embedded unequal power dynamics in the model (one-directional development goal plus reciprocal cultural goals) and perceptions of the Bulgarians as equal, if not better, to the Americans, made the model especially well suited and accepted by minority groups. The question is whether the identification of those minority groups as "disadvantaged" might have had the effect of reinforcing and perpetuating their unequal status in society, especially given that the volunteers often chose to work with those groups separately rather than by creating opportunities that can support equal-status contact with representatives of the majority. The latter is also the approach by two of the legacy organizations: the GLOW association organizes gender-segregated camps for girls (with plans to organize camps for boys only), while the Areté Youth Foundation organizes ethnically-segregated camps for Roma youth. In contrast, the CORPluS Foundation organizes a camp for those participants in the National Spelling Bee Competition who have reached the final round (students from urban and rural communities). Furthermore, both the students and their teachers are invited and treated as camp participants, which should support equalizing power dynamics between the two groups.

Participants in this research suggested that a dedicated study on ***development as relationship building***, especially through intermarriages, be undertaken. On multiple occasions I was reminded that Peace Corps/Bulgaria ranked high on percentage of marriages between volunteers to host country nationals compared to other countries.

Another strategy to deepen the case study would be to expand the research question by asking about ***the role of Peace Corps in neoliberal globalization*** including all of its dimensions: technological, economic, cultural/social, and environmental. Also, given the by-lingual character

of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria case, a comparison between the Peace Corps development rhetoric as expressed in Bulgarian language compared to English language may reveal important *linguistic dimensions in processes of engendering development*.

Future research can also assess *the uniqueness of the Peace Corps/Bulgaria program and Bulgaria's post-socialist context*. New cases can be added to the research design starting with other Peace Corps programs in former state socialist countries in Eastern Europe and Eurasia and then of other Peace Corps programs in other parts of the world. An alternative comparative strategy will be to keep Bulgaria, and not Peace Corps, as the constant and compare this case study to the deployment of other international development volunteer models in Bulgaria. For example, Peace Corps/Bulgaria can be compared to the operation of Japan Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCVs), ACIDI/VOCA, CVS-Bulgaria, and the European Voluntary Service (EVS) in Bulgaria, among others.

All of these future research trajectories will expand the contributions of this dissertation beyond the study of international development volunteer models in a post-socialist context (development and postsocialist studies) and neoliberalisms (sociology of development) to other research fields (social psychology, family, gender, migration, and globalization studies), as well as regions of the world. Ultimately, my hope is that this research contributes to the development of dialectic frameworks for the study of social transformation. Such frameworks will aim to explain not only how market logics penetrate social and cooperative practices, but how cooperative and social values penetrate market practices and the factors that determine how those logics balance each other.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews with Program Staff

Note: This interview is confidential and completely voluntary. If we should come to any questions that you do not want to answer, just let me know and we will go on to the next question. May I record the interview?

1. Tell me about your career at Peace Corps/Bulgaria? Did you get recruited or did you apply for your first Peace Corps job? What did you do prior to joining the Peace Corps? What do you do now?
2. In your own words, how did you understand the purpose of the U.S. Peace Corps in Bulgaria? Did this purpose change overtime? How so?
3. In your opinion, what are the strengths and weakness of the Peace Corps development model compared to other development programs?
4. What is the difference between Peace Corps/Bulgaria and other Peace Corps projects in Eastern Europe or other regions in the world? How did the project change between 1991 and 2013?
5. Would you explain to me the decision-making process involved in the opening and closing of different Peace Corps/Bulgaria sector programs (TEFL, SBD, ENV, CED, COD, and YD)? How much of a say in those changes did you have? (Discuss preliminary data from Q. 6 from PCVs web-survey)
6. What are the most enduring legacies of Peace Corps? What role did Peace Corps play in the post-socialist development (transformation) of Bulgaria? What kind of development was promoted by the Peace Corps program? What kind of change did it bring about? (Discuss preliminary data from Q. 3 & Q.4 from PCVs web-survey)
7. What kind of global, transnational, and/or international connections were facilitated by Peace Corps? What kind of global initiatives were launched and supported by Peace Corps? (Discuss preliminary data from Q. 5 from PCVs web-survey)
8. How do you think your experience working for Peace Corps has shaped your understanding of international development, community development, socialism, communism, capitalism, neoliberalism, and globalization? (Discuss preliminary data from Q.2 from PCVs web-survey)
9. If it were up to you when would you have closed the program? According to what criteria? (Discuss preliminary data from Q.7 from PCVs web-survey)
10. Do you think that Bulgaria could/should have a similar international volunteer program?
11. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX B: Volunteer Survey Methodology

Population Frame: Nested frames where B is part of A

1. **Frame A:** All **1,220** sworn-in Bulgaria Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs). The figure is based on a list of Bulgaria Volunteers provided by Peace Corps Headquarters including all individuals who were sent to Bulgaria for a regular 2-year assignment (1,286 PCVs) minus those who returned prior to their swearing-in dates at the closure of their Pre-Service Training (66 PCVs). Swearing-in dates were obtained from PCVs and staff records.
2. **Frame B:** All **120** sworn-in Bulgaria PCVs who have served more than 2 years (from now on referred to as 2+PCVs). The figure is based on a list of Bulgaria Volunteers provided by Peace Corps Headquarter and data about the swearing-in date for each group.

Survey Mode: Web-Based Survey administered through www.SurveyMonkey.com.

Sampling Frame: Collecting data from the Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs) presented a particular challenge since Peace Corps had provided me with the names of all volunteers who were sent to serve in Bulgaria (as well as their assignment, start and end date) but no contact information for them. Since there were existing online social media groups of Bulgaria volunteers on Facebook, I decided to pursue a recruitment strategy for an online panel of volunteers for my research. The strategy had two stages: (1) invite volunteers to participate in the research through a subscribe survey and (2) administer a second more-detailed survey with the subscribers for the online panel. The subscribe survey included an incentive for completion of the survey in the form of a donation to a two Peace Corps/Bulgaria Legacy Organizations (The Areté Youth Foundation and the CORPluS Foundation).

Stage I: Subscribe Survey (Recruitment): The subscribe survey was conducted in the August 2013 – April 2014 period and included two waves:

1. **First Wave:** Self-selected sample of PCVs responding to:
 - a. In August 2013 an invitation was posted on social media sites (Facebook Peace Corps/Bulgaria groups and LinkedIn Peace Corps groups) by the researcher and representatives of Peace Corps/Bulgaria Legacy Organizations who benefit from the survey participation with a Web LINK to the survey AND the initial invitations could be forwarded by other RPCVs or former Peace Corps/Bulgaria staff member with a Web LINK to the survey.
 - b. This wave resulted in a total of 76 eligible responses.
2. **Second Wave:** Targeted Sampling of 2+ RPCVs
 - a. In January 2014 the researcher sent individual e-mails from her msu account with a Web LINK to the survey to 2+ RPCVs. Personal e-mail were obtained directly through social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) messages, by other RPCVs who have already completed the survey, and by referrals from Peace Corps staff.
 - b. This wave resulted in additional 76 eligible responses.

At the close of the survey at the end of April 2014, there were a total of 152 eligible entries, including 65 2+RPCVs.

Stage II: Follow-up Survey (Online Panel): The follow-up web-based survey was conducted in November 2014. A personal e-mail invitation was sent to a total of 107 individuals¹⁰⁴ (including 30 2+ PCVs) on November 3 followed by two reminders on November 7 and November 11. At the close of the survey at the end of November 2014, there were a total of 76 eligible response entries¹⁰⁵, including 17 partial responses from 2+RPCVs (answers only to questions about the profile of the volunteer) and another 13 complete responses from 2+ RPCVs. The sample size under population frame A is thus 76 if all eligible responses are considered or 59, if only complete eligible responses are considered. Whereas the sample size under population frame B is 30 if all eligible responses are considered or 13 if only complete eligible responses are considered.

Table 26: Volunteer Survey Response Rates

Survey Characteristics	Population Frame A: sworn in PCVs	Population Frame B: 2+ PCVs
Subscribe Survey		
Population Size	1,220	120
Number of Respondents	152	65
Response Rate	12%	54%
Follow-up Survey		
Sample Size	107	30
Number of Respondents	76 (59)	30 (13)
Response Rate	71% (55%)	100% (43%)

Concepts of Measurement: The following topics informed the survey questionnaires.

1. Eligibility Questions/Type of Peace Corps Assignment

- Bulgaria sworn-in RPCV
- Group B/Year of Service
- Program (TEFL, SBD/CED, ENV, COD, YD)
- Length of service
- Follow-up Survey only:
- Site size (village, town/city, municipal center, regional center, capital) + Name
- Type of host organization (school, municipality, chitalishte, NGO, park, other) + Name

2. Attitude/Opinions about Peace Corps

- *What kind* of development is promoted by Peace Corps
- Follow-up Survey only:

¹⁰⁴ The subscribe survey included a total of 152 eligible participants 106 of which indicated an interest to participate in a second more-detailed survey but only 100 provided an e-mail. In addition, there were 7 respondents who provided an e-mail but did not indicate a specific format that they preferred to be contacted by. I decided to add them to the sample size, which thus included a total of 107 individuals.

¹⁰⁵ A total of 107 invitations for the follow-up survey were sent out resulting in 78 responses: 69.2% were complete (54) and 30.8% were partial (24). Of those 2 responses were empty and another 17 of the partial responses included only profile data and no answers to the substantive Qs and were thus excluded from the survey. This left a new total of 59 eligible responses.

- Self-assessment of service impact (replication of Qs from the 2009 and 2010 Peace Corps Annual Volunteer Surveys)
- 3. **Memory questions about Peace Corps experience** (Follow-up Survey only):
 - Involvement in neoliberal development
 - Neoliberal development as policy: structural adjustment/reforms, financial deregulation, price liberalization, privatization, withdrawal of the state from social service provision (economic growth policies through reduction of market distortions)
 - Neoliberal development as ideology: strong private property rights, free markets, free trade (market fundamentalism)
 - Neoliberal development as governmentality: the expansion of the rationality of the market to non-economic domains (social capital, human capital, social entrepreneurship, capacity building, community building, commodification).
 - Involvement in alternative development
 - Social Justice: Equality/Human rights (public goods)
 - Participatory/Direct democracy (including in the workplace)
 - Sustainable/No-growth development
 - Involvement in neoliberal cooptation
 - Disconnect between the local and the national/global
 - Volunteering without political activism
 - Non-universal/means-tested programs with limited budget (increase of inequalities)
 - Professionalization of volunteering/development (marginalization of grassroots community activities)
 - Community projects that focus on individual responsibility instead of mutual support/solidarity

Note: some authors equate neoliberal governmentality with neoliberal cooptation
 - Involvement in globalization processes/global issues
 - Technological: transportation and digital communications technologies (The Internet)
 - Economic (movement of capital, products & services): opening up to free vs. fair global trade, investment and capital
 - Cultural/Social (movement of people, practices): Westernization/Americanization vs. Bulgarization/indigenization (consumerism); proselytize (spread of world religions); migration (study abroad, labor migrants, refugees, human trafficking, transnationalism); popular culture and sports, globalization of disease (AIDS & other deadly diseases)
 - Political (ideas, social movements/networks): promoting neoliberal vs. alter-neoliberal ideas (equality/human rights, democracy, environmentalism); the rule of law; insertion in global governance regimes (IGOs, INGOs, ISO)/regional governance regimes (EU);
 - Environmental (environmental awareness): pollution, biodiversity conservation, natural resource management, natural disasters, global warming
- 4. **Demographics**
 - Career after Peace Corps

Follow-up Survey only:

- Age at time of service
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- Education/Degree
- Citizenship

5. ***Motivation for Research Participation*** (Follow-up Survey only)

APPENDIX C: RPCV Subscribe Survey Questionnaire

Bulgaria RPCV Subscribe Survey

AUTHORIZATION TO USE AND DISCLOSE INFORMATION

***Bulgaria RPCV Subscribe Survey Informed Consent Description**

This survey should not take you more than 3 to 5 minutes to complete.

It is part of a Ph.D. Dissertation Research Project on “Enabling Postsocialist Development and Globalization through Peace Corps Agency” by Svetla Dimitrova, a Doctoral Candidate in Sociology at Michigan State University.

Svetla is a former Peace Corps-Bulgaria PST Technical Trainer (2000-2004) for the ENV and COD Programs, now married to B14 ENV RPCV John Tyler Fox (Malko Tarnovo). Her research aims to explore reflections about the postsocialist transformation of Bulgaria among Peace Corps-Bulgaria staff, PCVs, counterparts, and government partners.

Only former Peace Corps Volunteer who have served in Bulgaria are invited to complete this voluntary confidential survey.

Conditions and Stipulations

1. I understand the survey includes:

- **Questions about Peace Corps-Bulgaria that will give me an idea about the questions that the dissertation research may explore.**
- **a subscribe page that asks for my name and e-mail, if I want to participate in future data collection activities for this dissertation project.**
- **A profile page where I can provide my Peace Corps demographics.**
- I may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time. `**

2. I understand that all information is confidential. I will not be personally identified in any reports. My personal contact information will be kept in a secure location accessible only to the project investigators and the MSU Internal Review Board staff.

3. I agree to complete the online subscribe survey for research purposes and that the data derived from this survey may be made available for the general public in the form of public presentations, journals or newspaper articles, and/or in books.

4. I understand that as a research participant subscriber, I may receive e-mail invitations to complete a web-based survey, to give an interview, or to sit in a focus group sometime by

Bulgaria RPCV Subscribe Survey

the end of 2014. I can always decide not to participate in the invites, and if I do participate, my responses will be kept completely confidential. After the research study is completed, I will receive information about the publications with the findings that I helped generate. I understand I can exit the survey at any time and choose not to answer any questions.

5. I understand that my consent will not directly benefit me but that there is an incentive for subscription in the form of a donation to two Peace Corps-Bulgaria legacy organizations. For each Bulgaria PCV who provides her/his contact information and completes this survey, Svetla will donate \$1 to the Areté Youth Foundation and the total amount will then be matched for the benefit of CORPlus up to \$1,300 for both donations, the total number of PCVs who have served in Bulgaria.

6. I understand that I can contact the researcher Svetla Dimitrova with concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, at svetlasd@msu.edu, 804.577-7251. Further, If I have questions or concerns about my role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, I may contact, anonymously if I wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at Olds Hall, 408 West Circle Drive #207, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

7. By clicking below I freely provide consent and acknowledge my rights as a voluntary research participant as outlined above.

- ☐ I accept the above conditions and understand this will not affect or benefit me in any way.
- ☐ I decline participation and understand this will not affect or benefit me in any way.

Survey Questions

Bulgaria RPCV Subscribe Survey

Q 1. Rate the extent to which your Peace Corps experience in Bulgaria has shaped your understanding of the following:

	Very much	Somewhat	Undecided	Not really	Not at all
International development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Community development	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Socialism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Capitalism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Neoliberalism	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Globalization	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q2. I agree that Peace Corps-Bulgaria has promoted neoliberal development (focus on economic growth through market driven approaches including privatization, liberalization, deregulation, etc.)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Other (please specify)

Q 3. I agree that Peace Corps-Bulgaria has promoted alternative development (focus on social and community well being through people-centered approaches to development including minority empowerment & participation, human development, sustainability, etc.)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Other (please specify)

Q 4. I agree that Peace Corps-Bulgaria has promoted the establishment of global/transnational linkages and awareness

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Not sure

Other (please specify)

Bulgaria RPCV Subscribe Survey

Q 5. In your opinion, to what extent the following have shaped the Peace Corps-Bulgaria Program, including its development approach?

	Very much	Somewhat	Undecided	Not really	Not at all
Peace Corps Volunteers (PCVs)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Local Counterparts	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Host Organizations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Bulgarian Government	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Peace Corps Program Staff (Bulgarian citizens)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Peace Corps Program Staff (American citizens)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Peace Corps Country Director	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Peace Corps Headquarters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The American Government	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q.6 In my opinion, the closing of the Peace Corps-Bulgaria program in 2013 was:

- ☐ Timely
- ☐ Early (the program could/could have closed later)
- ☐ Overdue (the program should/could have closed earlier)

Other (please specify)

Subscribe Page

I would be interested to participate in the PhD Dissertation Research Project on “Enabling Postsocialist Development and Globalization through Peace Corps Agency” and discuss my answers further in the following format(s):

- ☐ A more detailed confidential web-based survey
- ☐ Interview by phone or skype
- ☐ Focus group

Other (please specify)

My name is

You can contact me at the following e-mail

Bulgaria RPCV Subscribe Survey

Profile Info

I was in group:

I was in the following program(s):

- ☐ ENV - Environmental Training & Management
- ☐ CED - Community & Economic Development
- ☐ COD - Community & Organizational Development
- ☐ SBD - Small-Business Development
- ☐ TEFL - Teaching English as a Foreign Language
- ☐ YD - Youth Development
- ☐ Response Corps

Other (please specify)

I served in Bulgaria for more than 2 years:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

I continued working in the professional development sector after my PC service:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

I work(ed) for Peace Corps as staff after my volunteer service:

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY!

You may contact Svetla Dimitrova with any questions you may have at svetlasd@msu.edu.

Have a wonderful day!

APPENDIX D: RPCV Follow-up Survey Questionnaire

Bulgaria RPCV Follow-Up Survey

AUTHORIZATION TO USE AND DISCLOSE INFORMATION

* *Informed Consent Description

This survey should not take you more than 15 minutes to complete.

It is part of a Ph.D. Dissertation Research Project on "Enabling Postsocialist Development and Globalization through Peace Corps Agency" by Svetla Dimitrova, a Doctoral Candidate in Sociology at Michigan State University.

Conditions and Stipulations

1. The survey is for research purposes and the data derived from this survey may be made available for the general public in the form of public presentations, journals or newspaper articles, and/or in books.
2. Your participation in this survey is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate at all or you may refuse to answer certain questions or discontinue your participation at any time without consequence.
3. All of your responses will be kept confidential. You will not be personally identified in any reports. Your personal contact information will be kept in a secure location accessible only to the project investigators and the MSU Internal Review Board staff.
4. Your consent to participate will not directly benefit you.
5. You can contact the researcher Svetla Dimitrova with concerns or questions about this study, such as scientific issues, how to do any part of it, or to report an injury, at svetlasd@msu.edu, 804-577-7251. Further, If you have questions or concerns about your role and rights as a research participant, would like to obtain information or offer input, or would like to register a complaint about this study, you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Michigan State University's Human Research Protection Program at 517-355-2180, Fax 517-432-4503, or e-mail irb@msu.edu or regular mail at Olds Hall, 408 West Circle Drive #207, MSU, East Lansing, MI 48824.

By clicking below I freely provide consent and acknowledge my rights as a voluntary research participant as outlined above.

- ☐ I accept the above conditions and understand this will not affect or benefit me in any way.
- ☐ I decline participation and understand this will not affect or benefit me in any way.

Bulgaria RPCV Follow-Up Survey

Eligibility Questions

Please confirm your eligibility to take this survey by selecting one of the following options:

- ☐ Yes, I was sworn-in to serve as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bulgaria
- ☐ No, I was NOT sworn-in to serve as a Peace Corps volunteer in Bulgaria

Please select your group.

Please select your program assignment:

	1st assignment	2nd assignment, if you changed after swearing-in
CED - Community & Economic Development	☐	☐
COD - Community & Organizational Development	☐	☐
ENV - Environmental Training & Management	☐	☐
SBD - Small-Business Development	☐	☐
TEFL - Teaching English as a Foreign Language	☐	☐
YD - Youth Development	☐	☐

Please select the best description of your site:

	1st site	2nd site, if you changed
Village	☐	☐
Small Town	☐	☐
Town/City (Municipal center)	☐	☐
Town/City (Provincial/Regional center)	☐	☐
Capital	☐	☐

Please select the best description of your host organization:

	Primary	Secondary
School	☐	☐
Municipality	☐	☐
NGO	☐	☐
Park/Forestry	☐	☐

Other (please specify)

Which was your primary host organization?

Name:

City/Town/Village:

Municipality:

Province/Region:

Which was your secondary host organization, if any?

Name:

City/Town/Village:

Municipality:

Province/Region:

Please choose the best description for the length of your service:

	Yes	No
I completed my service prior to finishing my 2-year assignment	☐	☐
I completed my 2-year assignment	☐	☐
I extended my 2-year assignment into a 3rd/4th year of service	☐	☐
I came back as a Response Corps volunteer	☐	☐

Bulgaria RPCV Follow-Up Survey

About Peace Corps-Bulgaria

In your opinion, is Peace Corps a development program?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If YES, how would you describe the kind of development that Peace Corps does? What are the goals, methods, and agents of the Peace Corps development model/approach?

If NO, how would you describe the purpose of Peace Corps?

In your opinion, what are the strengths and weaknesses of Peace Corps compared to other development approaches?

Do you think that the purpose of Peace Corps in Bulgaria was in any way supportive of the goals of the postsocialist transition: establishment of democracy and market economy? If yes, what role did PCVs and the Peace Corps program play in this processes?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the respondent to write their answer to the question above.

Bulgaria RPCV Follow-Up Survey

Peace Corps Experience

Please indicate whether you engaged in the following activities as part of your Peace Corps work:

	Yes	No
Economic growth generation	☐	☐
Structural adjustment reforms	☐	☐
Financial deregulation	☐	☐
Price liberalization	☐	☐
Privatization (sale of government owned assets to private entities)	☐	☐
Welfare privatization (contracting gov social service provision to private/non-profit entities)	☐	☐
Cutting government social services	☐	☐
Free trade zones (or foreign-trade zones) development	☐	☐
Microenterprise development	☐	☐
Cooperatives development	☐	☐
Social entrepreneurship development	☐	☐
Human and social capital building	☐	☐
Civil society building	☐	☐
Identification of community needs	☐	☐
Facilitation of community driven initiatives to address those needs	☐	☐
Community program/project development	☐	☐
Grantwriting	☐	☐
Establishing public-private partnerships	☐	☐
Income generation	☐	☐
Poverty reduction	☐	☐
Promotion of human rights	☐	☐
Working with special groups (e.g. disabled, elderly, ethnic minorities, orphans)	☐	☐
Facilitation of participatory decision-making	☐	☐
Public policy advocacy	☐	☐
Political activism	☐	☐
Democracy building	☐	☐

	Yes	No
Comments:		
What kind of resource mobilization did you do/facilitate? (Check all that apply) ☐ Local resource mobilization ☐ National resource mobilization ☐ International resource mobilization ☐ None		
Were you involved in the following POLITICO-ECONOMIC globalization activities during your Peace Corps service?		
	Yes	No
Improving access to international transportation networks	☐	☐
Improving access to digital information and communications technologies	☐	☐
Helping locals improve their digital/Internet literacy	☐	☐
Bringing in foreign investment and capital (including foreign donations)	☐	☐
Promoting global free trade	☐	☐
Promoting global fair trade	☐	☐
Connecting locals to foreigners (i.e. sister city programs, exchange programs, etc.)	☐	☐
Helping local organizations establish international partnerships	☐	☐
Helping local organizations join/collaborate with transnational advocacy movements (e.g. Greenpeace, Human Rights Watch, World Social Forum, labor unions)	☐	☐
Helping local organizations meet international standards (e.g. EU, ISO, UN, etc.)	☐	☐
Comments		

Were you involved in the following CULTURAL globalization activities during your Peace Corps service?

	Yes	No
Translating Bulgarian cultural products in English	☐	☐
Promoting international tourism	☐	☐
Helping locals study abroad (e.g. college applications)	☐	☐
Helping locals work abroad (e.g. help with visa applications)	☐	☐
Working with migrants/refugees in Bulgaria	☐	☐
Prevention of human trafficking	☐	☐
Prevention of AIDS/HIV & other pandemics	☐	☐

Comments:

Were you involved in the following ENVIRONMENTAL globalization activities during your Peace Corps service?

	Yes	No
Increasing awareness of Air, Water and Land pollution	☐	☐
Promoting biodiversity conservation	☐	☐
Promoting sustainable management of natural resources	☐	☐
Promoting organic production	☐	☐
Disaster preparedness and response	☐	☐
Increasing awareness about global warming/climate change	☐	☐

Comments:

Bulgaria RPCV Follow-Up Survey

Volunteer Assignment Goals and Impact

This section replicates questions from the Peace Corps "PCV Annual Volunteer Survey" on Volunteers' self-assessments of the impact of their service.

To what extent did your Volunteer work assignment address the following:

	Not at all	Minimally	Adequately	Considerably	Exceptionally
Meets the need for trained men and women (Goal 1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Transfers skills to host country individuals and organizations (Goal 1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Builds local capacity for sustainability (Goal 1)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Identification of community needs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Involves local people in planning and implementing activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mobilizes host country nationals to volunteer	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Complements other local development initiatives	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helps promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served (Goal 2)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Helps promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans (Goal 3)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

To what extent did your host community

	Not at all	Minimally	Moderately	Considerably	Exceptionally
Need the assistance that you provided	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Want the assistance that you provided	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please rate how well you think you achieved: Goal 1) To help the people of interested countries in meeting their need for trained men and women; Goal 2) To help promote a better understanding of Americans on the part of the peoples served; and Goal 3) To help promote a better understanding of other peoples on the part of Americans.

	Not at all	Minimally	Moderately	Considerably	Exceptionally
Goal 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Goal 2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Goal 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please rate the extent to which Peace Corps's commitment to the apolitical role of Peace Corps volunteers has restricted your ability to achieve

	1 Not at all	2 Minimally	3 Moderately	4 Considerably	5 Exceptionally
Goal 1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Goal 2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Goal 3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Has your understanding of "international development" changed because of your Peace Corps service?

- ☐ No
- ☐ YES, it changed in the following ways:

Bulgaria RPCV Follow-Up Survey

After Peace Corps

What career did you pursue after your Peace Corps service? (Check all that apply)

	In the U.S.	In Bulgaria	In another country
Work in government	☐	☐	☐
Work in the private sector	☐	☐	☐
Work for an NGO	☐	☐	☐
Work for Peace Corps Response	☐	☐	☐
Other volunteer activities	☐	☐	☐
Graduate school/academic credentialing	☐	☐	☐
Travel	☐	☐	☐
Politics (running for office)	☐	☐	☐

Do you have experience as an international development worker, aside from your Peace Corps service?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Bulgaria RPCV Follow-Up Survey

Demographics

What was your age at the time of your Peace Corps Service in Bulgaria?

- ☐ 20 - 29
- ☐ 30 - 39
- ☐ 40 - 49
- ☐ 50 - 59
- ☐ 60 - 69
- ☐ 70+

What is your age now?

- ☐ 20 - 29
- ☐ 30 - 39
- ☐ 40 - 49
- ☐ 50 - 59
- ☐ 60 - 69
- ☐ 70+

What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other

What is your race/ethnicity?

- ☐ American Indian/Alaska Native
- ☐ African American
- ☐ Asian American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ White/Caucasian/European American
- ☐ Two or more races

Other (please specify)

What is your highest degree received?

- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Professional School Degree
- ☐ Doctorate Degree

In what field of study is your degree(s)? (Check all that apply)

- ☐ Agricultural sciences/Natural resources
- ☐ Biological sciences/Biomedical sciences
- ☐ Business Management/Administrative Services
- ☐ Computer and Information sciences
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Health sciences
- ☐ Humanities
- ☐ Law
- ☐ Mathematics
- ☐ Physical sciences
- ☐ Public Administration
- ☐ Social Sciences
- ☐ Other Professional Degree
- ☐ Other (please specify)

What is your citizenship?

- ☐ U.S./American only
- ☐ U.S./American and Other (please specify)

Bulgaria RPCV Follow-Up Survey

Motivation for completion of survey

How important were the following factors in accepting to participate in this research (completing the initial "Bulgaria RPCV Subscribe Survey")?

	Very Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not at all important	N/A
Liked the research topic	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Received a personal request by the researcher (Svetla)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Received a request from a fellow RPCV/Peace Corps staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowing that the researcher worked for Peace Corps	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowing that the researcher is married to an RPCV	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know the researcher personally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know the spouse of the researcher personally	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The Incentive of \$1 donation to the Arete Youth Foundation and the CORPluS Foundation	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Comments:

Bulgaria RPCV Follow-Up Survey

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY!

You may contact the researcher Svetla Dimitrova with any questions you may have at svetlasd@msu.edu.

Have a wonderful day!

APPENDIX E: Guide for Focus Group with Volunteers

1. Welcome and Introductions

- When and where did you serve as a Peace Corps/Bulgaria volunteer (PCV)?

2. Purpose of the focus group, ground rules, incentives (no financial incentives)

3. Opening Question: In your own words, how did you understand the purpose of the Peace Corps program in Bulgaria?

4. Key Questions:

- Why did you become a PCV? What role did you play in the operation and development of your host organization? What is your legacy?
- What role did PCVs and the Peace Corps program play in the post-socialist development (transformation) of Bulgaria? What kind of development was promoted by the program? What kind of changes did they bring about?
- In what ways do you think PCVs and the Peace Corps program may have enabled the globalization of Bulgaria? What kind of global, transnational, and/or international connections (if any) were facilitated by you? Does your organization still maintain those connections? What about any global initiatives/issues that your organization began working on with your help? Have your host organization continued working on those same initiatives/issues?
- I would like you to comment on some preliminary data from a survey with Bulgaria RPCVs about the extent to which the following actors in the Peace Corps/Bulgaria partnership structure have shaped the Peace Corps/Bulgaria development model. What do you think about the results, especially on how PCVs have rated the role of local counterparts and host organizations?
- In your opinion, was the closing of the program in 2013 timely? Why yes or why not?

5. Ending questions: prompt the participants to summarize their positions, provide feedback concerning the interpretation of the group results and seek any information that may have been missed.

APPENDIX F: Guide for Semi-Structured Interviews with Volunteers

Note: This interview is confidential and completely voluntary. If we should come to any questions that you do not want to answer, just let me know and we will go on to the next question. May I record the interview?

1. Tell me about your Peace Corps/Bulgaria experience? Why did you become a PCV? When and where did you serve? What did you do prior to joining the Peace Corps? What do you do now?
2. In your own words, how did you understand the purpose of the U.S. Peace Corps in Bulgaria? What were the most common misunderstandings about the program that you had to address?
3. What are the most enduring legacies of Peace Corps/Bulgaria? What role did PCVs and the Peace Corps play in the post-socialist development (transformation) of Bulgaria? What kind of development was promoted by the Peace Corps program? What kind of change did it bring about? (Discuss preliminary data from Q. 3 & Q.4 from PCVs web-survey)
4. In what ways do you think PCVs and the Peace Corps program may have enabled the globalization of Bulgaria? What kind of global, transnational, and/or international connections (if any) were facilitated by you? Does your organization still maintain those connections? What about any global initiatives/issues that your organization began working on with your help? Have your host organization continued working on those same initiatives/issues? (Discuss preliminary data from Q. 5 from PCVs web-survey)
5. In your opinion, what are the strengths and weakness of the Peace Corps development model compared to other development programs? Who among the actors in the Peace Corps/Bulgaria partnership structure have shaped the Peace Corps/Bulgaria development model the most? (Discuss preliminary data from Q. 6 from PCVs web-survey)
6. In your opinion, was the closing of the program in 2013 timely? If it were up to you when would you have closed it? According to what criteria? (Discuss preliminary data from Q.7 from PCVs web-survey)
7. Do you think that Bulgaria could/should have a similar international volunteer development program?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX G: Guide for Focus Groups with Local Partners/Host Organizations

Note: This interview is confidential and completely voluntary. If we should come to any questions that you do not want to answer, just let me know and we will go on to the next question. May I record the interview?

1. How are you and your organization connected to Peace Corps/Bulgaria? How many volunteers did you and your organization host/work with and when was that?
2. Why did your organization apply for a PCV? What role did the PCV play in the operation and development of your organization? What is her/his legacy?
3. In your own words, how did you understand the purpose of the Peace Corps program in Bulgaria?
4. What about the role that PCVs and the Peace Corps program played in the post-socialist development (transformation) of Bulgaria? What kind of development was promoted by the program? What kind of change did they bring about?
5. In what ways do you think PCVs and the Peace Corps program may have enabled the globalization of Bulgaria? What kind of global, transnational, and/or international connections (if any) were facilitated by the PCVs that you worked with? Does your organization still maintain those connections? What about any global initiatives/issues that your organization began working on with the help of your PCVs? Have you continued working on those same initiatives/issues?
6. In your opinion, was the closing of the program in 2013 timely? Why yes and why not?
7. Do you think that Bulgaria could/should have a similar international volunteer program?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX H: List of Secondary and Tertiary Data Sources

Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentations/Justifications:

1. Peace Corps. 1991. *Peace Corps Congressional Presentation, FY-1992.*
2. Peace Corps. 1992. *Peace Corps Budget Presentation, FY-1993.*
3. Peace Corps. 1993. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentation, FY-1994.*
4. Peace Corps. 1994. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentation, FY-1995.*
5. Peace Corps. 1995. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentation, FY-1996.*
6. Peace Corps. 1996. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentation, FY-1997.*
7. Peace Corps. 1997. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentation, FY-1998.*
8. Peace Corps. 1998. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentation, FY-1999.*
9. Peace Corps. 1999. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentation, FY-2000.*
10. Peace Corps. 2000. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentation, FY-2001.*
11. Peace Corps. 2001. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentation, FY-2002.*
12. Peace Corps. 2002. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Presentation, FY-2003.*
13. Peace Corps. 2003. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justification, FY-2004.*
14. Peace Corps. 2004. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justification, FY-2005.*
15. Peace Corps. 2005. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justification, FY-2006.*
16. Peace Corps. 2006. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justification, FY-2007.*
17. Peace Corps. 2007. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justification, FY-2008.*
18. Peace Corps. 2008. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justification, FY-2009.*
19. Peace Corps. 2009. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justification, FY-2010.*
20. Peace Corps. 2010. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justification, FY-2011.*
21. Peace Corps. 2011. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justification, FY-2012.*
22. Peace Corps. 2012. *Peace Corps Congressional Budget Justification, FY-2013.*

Peace Corps/Bulgaria Legal Documents:

1. 1991 Agreement between the Government of the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the Government of the United States Peace Corps in the Republic of Bulgaria.
2. 2002 Framework Agreement on Cooperation Between the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Bulgaria and The United States Peace Corps/Bulgaria (in Bulgarian)
3. 2002 Framework Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection at the Regional and Local Level Between The United States Peace Corps/Bulgaria and the Ministry of Environment and Water of the Republic of Bulgaria
4. 2003 Framework Agreement between United States Peace Corps in Bulgaria and The Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Bulgaria Regarding the Economic Development Program of Peace Corps
5. 2008 Framework Agreement on Cooperation Between the Ministry of Economy and Energy of the Republic of Bulgaria and The United States Peace Corps/Bulgaria
6. 2011 Memorandum of Understanding Between "The Land – a Source of Incomes" Foundation and United States Peace Corps in Bulgaria
7. 2011 Memorandum of Understanding Between Belene Municipality and United States Peace Corps in Bulgaria

Peace Corps/Bulgaria Welcome Books:

1. Peace Corps, April 2002. *The Peace Corps Welcomes You to Bulgaria: A Peace Corps Publication for New Volunteers* (document received through FOIA)

2. Peace Corps, December 2003. *The Peace Corps Welcomes You to Bulgaria: A Peace Corps Publication for New Volunteers* (document received through FOIA)
3. Peace Corps, March 2007. *The Peace Corps Welcomes You to Bulgaria: A Peace Corps Publication for New Volunteers* (document received through FOIA)
4. Peace Corps, November 2008. *The Peace Corps Welcomes You to Bulgaria: A Peace Corps Publication for New Volunteers* (document received through FOIA)
5. Peace Corps, December 2009. *The Peace Corps Welcomes You to Bulgaria: A Peace Corps Publication for New Volunteers* (document received through FOIA)

Studies on Peace Corps/Bulgaria:

1. Peace Corps. 2003. *Impact Evaluation of the Peace Corps Small Project Assistance (SPA) Project*. August 2003.
2. Peace Corps. 2009. *2009 Annual Volunteer Survey: BULGARIA*. October 13. Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning (link to document received through FOIA)
3. Peace Corps. 2009. *Host Country Impact Study: Bulgaria, Final Report*. Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning (link to document received through FOIA)
4. Peace Corps. 2010. *2010 Annual Volunteer Survey: BULGARIA*. October 2010. Office of Strategic Information, Research and Planning (link to document received through FOIA)
5. U.S. General Accounting Office. 1994. *Peace Corps: New Programs In Former Eastern Bloc Countries Should Be Strengthened: Report To Congressional Requesters*.

Peace Corps/Bulgaria Legacy Documents:

1. Peace Corps Bulgaria. 2011. *Oblast Impact Sheets*.
2. Peace Corps Bulgaria. 2011. *Special Anniversary Issue*. March.
3. Peace Corps Bulgaria. 2012. "Leadership and Tolerance Building Camps." *Peace Corps Bulgaria Legacy Newsletter*, Issue 2, Second Year, February 2012
4. Peace Corps Bulgaria. 2012. *Legacy Celebration: 22 years of service in Bulgaria: Program*. October 2. English Transcript.
5. Peace Corps/Bulgaria B27 Legacy Book Committee. 2012. *22 Years of Service: United States Peace Corps in Bulgaria 1991-2013*. Blurb [Volunteer Legacy Book]
6. US Peace Corps in Bulgaria. n.d.: *Together on the Road to Change: 1991 – 2013*. [PC/B Legacy Book]
7. Корпус на мира в България. 2011. "Spelling Bee 2012." *Бюлетин за предаване на опит на Корпус на мира в България*, Брой 1
8. Корпус на мира в България. 2012. "Лагери за играждане на лидерски умения и толеранност." *Бюлетин за предаване на опит на Корпус на мира в България*, Брой 2, година 2, Февруари 2012
9. Корпус на мира в България. 2012. "Тематични и дневни лагери." *Бюлетин за предаване на опит на Корпус на мира в България*, Issue 2, Part 1, 2012
10. Корпус на мира в България. 2012. "Лагер в Кутия." *Бюлетин за предаване на опит на Корпус на мира в България*, Issue 2, Part 2, 2012
11. Корпус на мира в България. н.д. „Програма за образование на Корпус на Мира." *Бюлетин за предаване на опит на Корпус на мира в България*

Peace Corps/Bulgaria Volunteer Data:

1. "Bulgaria Volunteers" pdf file with information about the names, assignment, start and end date of volunteers was provided by Peace Corps in response to my FOIA request in June 2013;
2. "All PCVs Bulgaria Data" excel file with sworn-in volunteer site placement information by group and site provided by a former Peace Corps/Bulgaria staff member in March 2015.

APPENDIX I: Tables

Table 27: Summary of Primary Data Sources by Type of Research Participant

Type of Data Format	No. Program Staff	No. PCVs	No. HO Reps	No. LO Reps (a)	Total
A. Survey Data Sets(2)					
• Subscribe Survey	-	152	-	-	152
• Follow-up Survey	-	76	-	-	76
Sub-total A:		153 (b)			153
B. Interview Transcripts (48)					
• Individual Interviews (44)	34 (c)	5	3	2	44
• Couple Interview (1)	-	1	1	-	2
Sub-total B:	34	6	4	2	46
C. Informal Interview (3)					
• E-mail	1	-	-	-	1
• Notes	-	2	-	-	2
Sub-total C:	1	2	-	-	3
D. Focus Group Transcripts (8)					
1. Burgas	-	-	4	-	4
2. Garmen	-	-	3	-	3
3. Elhovo	-	-	4	-	4
4. Malko Tarnovo	-	-	4	-	4
5. Spelling Bee Camp	-	-	6	-	6
6. Sofia (HO)	-	-	2 (d)	-	2
7. Sofia (LO)	-	-	-	3	3
8. Washington, D.C.	-	3	-	-	-
Sub-total D:	0	3	23	3	29
Sub-total B+C+D:	35	11	27	5	78
TOTAL:	35	155 (b)	27	5	222
Participants w/ LO Association:	7	5	-	5	17

Notes:

- The interviews with the “program staff-legacy org rep” and “volunteer-legacy org rep” dual status research participants are counted in the “No. Program staff” and “No.PCVs” columns and data sections because these participants were included in the sampling strategy for those research actor categories. The “HO rep-legacy org rep” dual status research participant, however, is not included in the “No. HO Reps” column and data section because this HO organization/research participant was included in the research as the fiscal sponsor for one of the legacy organizations (LO) not because it was part of the sampling strategy for the HO actor category.
- Some PCVs participated in more than one data collection method
- A total of 34 interviews were conducted, but the quality of one of the phone interview recordings did not allow that it is transcribed. This interview was thus excluded from the analysis.
- One of the participants knew PCVs from Romania but had not interacted directly with the PCV that served in his host organization. His comments were thus excluded from the analysis.

Table 28: Coding Instrument

<i>Category</i>	<i>Theme</i>	<i>Topic</i>
Conceptions of neoliberalism	Neoliberal policies	• Deregulation of the economy: removal of any regulations that may constrain the free movement of goods, services, capital and people (labor market flexibility, export-oriented policies, encouraging foreign-direct investment) • Liberalization of trade and industry: market friendly reregulation (tight fiscal and monetary policy, reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers, freeing the exchange rate, lower corporate taxes) • Privatization of state-owned enterprises (individual private property) • Anti-welfarism: withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision • Washington Consensus: Structural adjustment programs (SARs); Shock Therapy
	Neoliberal project/ideology	• Values of individual freedom and personal responsibility • Global free market & trade: deepening and widening of transnational economic connections: • New/enhanced conditions for capital accumulation through: (1) privatization and commodification, (2) financialization, (3) the management and manipulation of crisis, (4) state redistribution of the economy. • Increasing social inequalities within and between countries.
	Neoliberal governance	• Marketization: adoption of the “New public management” model based on market logic; • Commodification: turning everything into items that can be bought and sold • Government by proxy: transferring management functions from the state to the private/non-profit sectors (contracting out of state responsibilities for the provision of health, education, water and sanitation, and security and administrative functions such as the issuing of licenses, collection of fees and rates, issuing of fines, etc.) • Post-Washington consensus: “good governance” • Shift from civil (citizens) society to consumer (clients) society

Table 28 (cont'd)

Neoliberal voluntarism	Values/Goals	• Self-interest /self-sufficiency and competition • Inequality/Economic growth (neoliberal development)
	Practices	• Works to establish domestic voluntary sectors that focus on social service delivery including volunteering that replaces state social service provision (needs-based approaches to development) • Works to establish domestic voluntary sectors that serve as an extension of the government/private sectors • Focus on individual empowerment projects • Supports power differentials: hierarchical management/decision-making
	Subjectivity	• Neoliberal subjects (Consumers/Clients) • Cultural supremacy: simplistic/paternalistic perception of the world • Short-term and narrow view of development • One-way interaction: volunteers as object of development (skill-transfer); north-south and west-east volunteering
Counter-neoliberal Voluntarism	Values/Goals	• Solidarity (mutuality) and cooperation; • Social and environmental justice/equity (alternative development).
	Practices	• Works to promote political activism (advocacy/campaigning) including volunteering that expands political, economic, and social rights (human rights) and environmentalism (rights-based approaches to development) • Works to establish domestic voluntary sectors that act as a critical partner of the state. • Focus on collective social empowerment projects • Supports equalizing power dynamics: democratic management/decision-making
	Subjectivity	• Critical Global Citizens • Cultural relativism: Complex understanding of world interdependence • Long-term and complex view of development • Two-way interaction: volunteers are both objects and subjects of development; reciprocal exchanges/multidirectional volunteering
Peace Corps/ Bulgaria Role	Transition Goals	• Democracy (Civil Society) • Economy • EU integration
	Peace Corps Goals	• Goal 1 • Goal 2 • Goal 3

Table 29: Number of Trainees and New Volunteers by Year, Group, and PST Sites

Year	Group	No. Ts	No. Vs	Site
1991	B1	27	26	Bankya
1992	B2	26	26	Bankya
1993	B3	30	28	Bankya
1994	B4	24	23	Bankya
1995	B5	37	33	Bankya
1996	B6	45	42	Kyustendil
1997	B7	57	56	Kyustendil
1998	B8	52	51	Samokov
1999	B9	68	63	Samokov
2000	B10	70	66	Dupnitsa
2001	B11	54	50	Panagyuirishte
2002	B12	69	67	Panagyuirishte
2003	B13	42	41	HUB: Pazardzhik Satellites (9): Batak, Belovo, Bratsigovo, Panagyuirishte, Perushtitsa, Peshtera, Rakitovo, Strelcha, and Velingrad
	B14	56	55	HUB: Pazardzhik Satellites (9): Batak, Belovo, Bratsigovo, Panagyuirishte, Perushtitsa, Peshtera, Rakitovo, Strelcha, and Velingrad
2004	B15	45	41	HUB: Pazardzhik Satellites (12): Batak, Belovo, Bratsigovo, Ihtiman, Kostenets, Panagyuirishte, Perushtitsa, Peshtera, Rakitovo, Saedinenie, Strelcha, and Velingrad
	B16	59	56	HUB: Pazardzhik Satellites (12): Batak, Belovo, Bratsigovo, Ihtiman, Kostenets, Panagyuirishte, Perushtitsa, Peshtera, Rakitovo, Saedinenie, Strelcha, and Velingrad
2005	B17	51	48	HUB: Pazardzhik Satellites (10): Banya, Bratsigovo, Hisarya, Kaloyanovo, Kostenets, Krichim, Kurtovo Konare, Septemvri, Stamboliyski, Trud,
	B18	50	48	HUB: Pazardzhik Satellites (10): Banya, Bratsigovo, Hissar, Kaloyanovo, Kostenets, Krichim, Kurtovo Konare, Septemvri, Stamboliyski, Trud
2006	B19	41	37	HUB: Dupnitsa Satellites (9): Boboshevo, Bobov Dol, Dren, Kocherinovo, Kraynitsi, Radomir, Rila, Samokov, and Simitli

Table 29 (cont'd)

Year	Group	No. Ts	No. Vs	Site
2006	B20	42	39	HUB: Dupnitsa Satellites (9): Boboshevo, Bobov Dol, Dren, Kraynitsi, Kuystendil, Rila, Samokov, Sapareva Banya, and Simitli
2007	B21	41	40	HUB: Dupnitsa Satellites: (9) Boboshevo, Bobov Dol, Dren, Kraynitsi, Kuystendil, Radomir, Samokov, Sapareva Banya, Simitli
	B22	40	36	HUB: Dupnitsa Satellites (9): Boboshevo, Bobov Dol, Dren, Kraynitsi, Kuystendil, Radomir, Rila, Sapareva Banya, and Simitli
2008	B23	39	37	HUB: Dupnitsa Satellites (9): Dzhermen, Kraynitsi, Krupnik, Kuystendil, Ovcharts, Radomir, Ressilovo, Samoranovo, and Sapareva Banya
	B24	30	25	HUB: Dupnitsa Satellites: (7) Bobov Dol, Kraynitsi, Krupnik, Ovcharts, Rila, Samoranovo, and Sapareva Banya
2009	B25	63	62	HUB: Vratsa Satellites: (15) Altimir, Banitsa, Boichinovtsi, Borovan, Byala Slatina, Chelopek, Dobrolevo, Kravoder, Krivodol, Mezdra, Moravitsa, Pavolche, Pudria, Roman, and Varshets
2010	B26	87	85	HUB: Vratsa Satellites: (17) Borovan, Brenitsa, Byala Slatina, Iskar, Knezha, Koinare, Kravoder, Krivodol, Mezdra, Moravitsa, Pavolche, Popitsa, Pudria, Skrevena, Tarnava, Varshets, and Zverino
2011	B27	41	39	HUB: Vratsa Satellites: (9) Borovan, Byala Slatina, Iskar, Knezha, Koinare, Kravoder, Mezdra, Popitsa, and Tarnava
All		1,286	1,220	

Sources: Peace Corps/Bulgaria Volunteer data; Peace Corps Bulgaria Focus Group members

Table 30: Number of New Volunteers by Year and Assignment

Year		Assignment							
		Sector Projects					PCR	TOTAL	
		TEFL	SBD/CED	ENV	COD	YD			Sub-Total
1991	26						26		26
1992		26					26		26
1993	9	19					28		28
1994	7	16					23		23
1995	15	13	5				33		33
1996	21	12	9				42		42
1997	31	12	13				56		56
1998	26	11	14				51		51
1999	34	13	16				63		63
2000	30	16	20				66		66
2001	22	15	13				50		50
2002	34	20	13				67		67
2003	41	24	22		9		96		96
2004	41			40	16		97		97
2005	48			29	19		96		96
2006	37			21	18		76		76
2007	40			19	17		76		76
2008	37			14	11		62		62
2009	31			18	13		62		62
2010	39			23	23		85	6	91
2011	22			8	9		39	10	49
2012								3	3
2013								2	2
Sub-Total	591	197	125	172	135		1,220	21	1,241(a)
Sub-Total %	48%	16%	10%	14%	11%		100%		
Total %							98.3%	1.7%	100%

Notes: Since the number of PCR Volunteers includes 10 former sector volunteers, the total number of volunteers without the duplicates is 1,231.

Table 31: Number of Volunteers, Host Municipalities, Host Communities, and Host Organizations by Region

Region	Population	No. Vs	No. Municipality	No. Host Municipality	No. Host Community	Host Org
Bulgaria	7 364 570	1,220	265	202	273	710
Blagoevgrad	323,552	91	14	13	25	48
Burgas	415,817	60	13	9	14	35
Dobrich	189 677	35	8	7	11	17
Gabrovo	122 702	50	4	4	4	19
Haskovo	246 238	59	11	9	12	26
Kardzhali	152 808	49	7	6	8	21
Kyustendil	136 686	40	9	5	6	17
Lovech	141 422	42	8	8	12	22
Montana	148 098	53	11	7	7	20
Pazardzhik	275 548	68	12	11	15	38
Pernik	133 530	20	6	4	4	9
Pleven	269 752	45	11	9	14	27
Plovdiv	683 027	85	18	13	17	51
Razgrad	125 190	53	7	6	9	24
Ruse	235 252	25	8	5	7	15
Shumen	180 528	51	10	6	7	25
Silistra	119 474	30	7	5	5	13
Sliven	197 473	29	4	4	2	11
Smolyan	121 752	56	10	9	22	38
Sofia	247 489	85	22	19	21	43
Sofia capital	1 291 591	86	1	1	2	34
Stara Zagora	333 265	67	11	7	9	35
Targovishte	120 818	17	5	5	5	10
Varna	475 074	47	12	10	9	24
Veliko Turnovo	258 494	66	10	10	13	39
Vidin	101 018	40	11	4	4	17
Vratsa	186 848	30	10	4	6	18
Yambol	131 447	31	5	3	3	14
Missing data		15				

Source: NSI Census 2011population data. Retrieved August 21, 2015
(http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/PDOCS2/Census2011final_en.pdf).

APPENDIX J: A Vignette

The Peace Corps/Bulgaria Development Model in Action

*At the railway station I was buying tickets to Burgas and the ticket service was provided through a small hole of a glass window, which was located much beneath my size, my height level and I was bending down to give my money; the glass was thick, so I was screaming, so that the lady selling the tickets can hear me and vice-versa and when I purchased the tickets, the volunteer – business volunteer – looked at me, she didn't say "it's right, it is not right" she asked me a question, which was the only question I will never forget in my life, which changed my life path: **"Why did you bend down to give your money?" was the question.** and that was the first time for me as a young person when my mind clicked and I started researching and I realized that I do this at the bank, I do this at the postal office, I do this at the insurance office, I do this at the cinema, at the theater, whenever you can think of the public service was provide this way, you just go down, although that people are not very short, and give your money and you scream to each other because you can't hear the other person. **She didn't say what's right and what's wrong but she made me think and I would never think about this on my own because that's the reality for me that's all public service surrounding and it is very well designed.** I just looked at her for 2 minutes, although I am a pretty fast thinker, and told her "I know why. They just want to break me down." Communism is very well designed peaceful system. It kills you without making you feel it: slowly. It just breaks your back bone and you don't know how because you have anesthesia at the same time. **She asked me one question, which brought thousands of questions.** For me as a 16-year-old girl for me this is when my process of thinking started and I started asking myself why and why and why. Not everything was bad, no, people were living wonderfully. But they were told how not to think, how not to be proactive, our government can't be proactive, especially back at that times, because you don't have those people, you don't have those resources. Still people have difficulties of being on their own, because for 50 years people have been taught how not be. It needs time. So, that's why volunteers were very helpful. **That's why development was the most challenging rather than USAID because it changed mindsets,** maybe not 100% of the volunteers, but I would definitely say more than 80%; with small things. **They might have even not realized that, that they were doing it. The way the volunteer I told you had impacted me.** I am sure there are many more of those "MEs" around that have been impacted.*

- BG Program Assistant, Interview, emphasis mine.

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