



# Power, Exchange and Solidarity: Case Studies in Youth Volunteering for Development

Nichole Georgeou<sup>1</sup> · Benjamin Haas<sup>2</sup>

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**Abstract** The proliferation of volunteering for development (V4D) models, approaches and funding sources means V4D is no longer able to be neatly located within the third sector. The enormous diversity of interactions within the Youth V4D (YV4D) field provides an opportunity to examine new and different activities and trajectories to ascertain the extent to which the traditional values of V4D, reciprocity and solidarity continue to form part of YV4D. Using the classical third sector model of Evers and Laville (The third sector in Europe, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 2004), and drawing on Polanyi (The great transformation: the political and economic origins of our time, Beacon Press, Boston, 2001 [1944]) and Mauss (The gift. The form and reason for exchange in archaic societies, Routledge, London, 1990 [1925]), in particular their concepts of redistribution and reciprocity, we present three case studies of new hybrid YV4D trajectories—university YV4D, state YV4D programmes, and volunteer tourism/voluntourism—to reveal the different logics and features of contemporary YV4D. We argue that understanding these contemporary YV4D trajectories requires a focus on organisational and stakeholder structures of diverse volunteering activities, their relational logics and the forms of reciprocity they involve. We find that in the YV4D case studies we explore the neoliberal market logic of exchange, along with political ideologies and state interests, affects the YV4D model design.

**Keywords** Volunteering for development (V4D) · Power · Exchange · Solidarity · Reciprocity · Theory

## Introduction

Volunteering takes many forms across the world and is shaped culturally by notions of what it means to be a good citizen or community member. It is generally conceptualised as an activity undertaken by choice (i.e. ‘voluntary’) that carries no remuneration. It has also generally been understood as occurring within and through civil society, in that the activity of volunteering was not directed by the state, and nor was it a commercial activity, so it did not form part of ‘the market’. International volunteering for development (V4D) is a particular form of volunteering that involves organised contributions to communities outside of one’s own country for a specific period of time (Sherraden et al. 2006; Haas 2012). The origins of V4D can be traced to the beginning of the twentieth-century (Georgeou 2012: 29), however in recent years several new V4D trajectories have emerged, especially in the Youth V4D (YV4D) sector, that bring into question the theoretical positioning of V4D within civil society. By “trajectories” we mean the differing approaches that have emerged over time to cater for people with a desire to participate in V4D. These approaches are shaped by and reinforce the ideologies that support and foster a specific mode of development engagement. Trajectories also connotes non-static evolutionary pathways that can intersect each other and which can cross into, and can then in turn be influenced by, different sectors of society.

The intrusion of the market and the state into the traditional V4D domain of civil society now takes place through hybrid trajectories that link state, civil society and

✉ Nichole Georgeou  
N.Georgeou@westernsydney.edu.au

<sup>1</sup> Humanitarian and Development Research Initiative (HADRI), Western Sydney University, Sydney, Australia

<sup>2</sup> Department of Co-operative Studies, University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany

the market. The discourse around the effectiveness of V4D broadly is associated with partnerships between people and communities, and the new V4D trajectories employ a discourse of ‘global civil society’ (Lyons et al. 2012) and cosmopolitanism. This is important because V4D is increasingly being regarded by states as an alternative development approach to direct aid, and by private companies and ‘social entrepreneurs’ as a strategy that is claimed to strengthen the capacities and skills of host communities. Recent scholarship by Schech et al. (2016: 1) argues that relationships between host organisations and volunteers are central to achieving development impacts, and the concept of partnership (between some combination of state, business, NGOs and individuals) is fundamental to UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 17,<sup>1</sup> and is a logic that informs the operationalisation of all the SDGs.

Empirical studies of V4D have usually focused on issues such as the motives and benefits for volunteers (Wearing 2001; Georgeou 2012; Mostafanezhad 2013; Smith and Font 2014; Boluk, et al. 2016) or on their impacts on host communities (Palacios 2010; Schech et al. 2015; Lough and Tiessen 2017; Tiessen et al. 2018). These contributions and insights have not however led to a resolution of theoretical tensions. The problem is essentially that over-rigid or traditional definitions of what constitutes V4D do not capture the diversity of modes, logics, and funding models that currently proliferate. This article presents three case studies of YV4D that allow us to conceptualize how these new hybrid forms occur and operate in practice. Using a classical third sector model presented by Evers and Laville (2004) and drawing on Polanyi (2001 [1944]) and Mauss (1990 [1925])—in particular their concepts of redistribution and reciprocity—the case studies presented allow us to develop a model that captures some current trends and trajectories within YV4D so as to understand these organisational and stakeholder structures of diverse V4D activities, and their relational logics. This is significant as what we highlight are neo-colonial trends in global YV4D models that affect not only the understanding of poverty in the Global South (and thus social and political power), but also the practises of social justice, equality of opportunity and the design of future YV4D programmes.

## Methodology

This article presents three cases studies of YV4D—Australian University YV4D, German state YV4D programmes

<sup>1</sup> While ‘volunteering’ is not specifically mentioned in this target, SDG 17 acknowledges the centrality of people’s ownership of the SDGs, and the important role that volunteering plays in connecting people, providing services and technical assistance, and organising collective action for social change. See (UN Volunteers 2015; UN 2016).

and volunteer tourism/voluntourism.<sup>2</sup> Following Yin (2009: 48), case studies allow us to explore ‘the circumstance and condition of an everyday or commonplace situation’ in individual YV4D trajectories, and together they provide an opportunity to examine the various conceptualisations and experiences of YV4D actors, and to locate them within a theoretical model. The case studies utilise both qualitative (primarily textual analysis) and quantitative data (primarily statistical).

A concentration on one type of volunteering engagement (V4D), and a focus within that on three cases studies of one subset (YV4D), cannot of course lead to generalisations about either V4D, YV4D or other forms of volunteering generally. Our intention is more to demonstrate that assumptions about the relationship of V4D to civil society are no longer axiomatic and to use the insights provided by the case studies to ask different questions about new YV4D trajectories to focus on issues of reciprocity and solidarity within a global neoliberal world.

## Argument

We argue that University YV4D and state YV4D programmes represent hybrid forms of cooperation between public sector and private business, but as our case of the German state YV4D (the *weltwärts* programme) shows, official governance structures make it particularly difficult for civil society organisations to define their own goals within volunteering and development. Both of these cases, and new YV4D trajectories such as volunteer tourism that sells a ‘development experience’, disrupt traditional understandings of volunteering as occurring wholly within civil society, while the regulatory demands imposed by governments to justify the provision of public funding to YV4D programmes fundamentally reconfigure the relationships that previously existed between northern NGOs and communities in the global South, and between the state and NGOs in the North, impacting on global power structures.

Arguably what we propose is significant as it allows us to: (1) document a specific subset of V4D in its relations to state, civil society and the private sector, (2) consider the

<sup>2</sup> Some commentators (see Grabowski, Wearing, Small 2015; Brown and Morrison 2003) have argued for a distinction between volunteer tourism (linked to helping communities achieve development goals) and what is tagged ‘voluntourism’ (which covers those who engage in a little volunteering whilst on holiday). We use the terms ‘volunteer tourism’ and ‘voluntourism’ interchangeably as this distinction rests on motivations of volunteers, the percentage of time spent on development activities in country, and whether they consider themselves to be ‘tourists’. We consider this distinction as problematic, especially as time as a significant demarcation of the difference between volunteer tourism and voluntourism programmes has been highly contested (McGloin and Georgeou 2015; Chen 2018).

need for better delineation of alternative models of V4D for the purpose of better understanding their outcomes; (3) apply our model to other forms of V4D, hopefully allowing a break from the conceptual stasis of state/civil society/market towards a focus on power, reciprocity and solidarity; (4) construct alternative YV4D pathways founded on strong ethical principles, practices and reciprocity, which involve genuine partnerships based on solidarity (i.e. Langdon and Agyeyomah 2014).

## Structure

This article has four parts. In Part I, we review the relationship of V4D and YV4D to civil society, arguing changing modes of engagement raise new questions that require new explorations. In Part II, we advance a two-tiered theoretical model: first, a structuralist level that captures the organisational logics of YV4D trajectories, organisations, programmes and institutions; second, a post-structuralist relational level that captures the symbolic order of YV4D trajectories, such as the interplay between power, exchange and solidarity. In Part III we present data from Australian university YV4D, the German YV4D programme *weltwärts*, and volunteer tourism, which is predominantly attractive to young people, often school leavers on their ‘gap year’ or between university semesters. In examining these three cases we illuminate the strength and value of our theoretical model. In Part IV we address the issue of how the increased involvement of ‘for-profit’ organisations and the state within YV4D (as well as mixed public/non-profit or public/for-profit schemes), requires a shift from the traditional understanding of YV4D (and V4D generally) as an activity taking place within the non-profit and civil society sectors. This raises a series of questions surrounding the extent to which reciprocity and solidarity remain as key features in emerging trajectories of YV4D (and perhaps V4D generally). We also question the impact of the intrusion of neoliberal market logic of exchange, along with political ideologies and state interests on V4D and YV4D model design, which has significant consequences for future YV4D engagement.

## State, Civil Society and Market in Volunteering for Development

Volunteering has traditionally been conceptualised as occurring within and through civil society, and international volunteering for development (V4D) as occurring within an emerging ‘global civil society’. In this view, individuals who travel abroad to volunteer are understood as demonstrating some type of emerging ‘global citizenship’, or are engaging in ‘transnational civil society’

(Batliwala and Brown 2006), yet as both the state and the private sector (‘the market’) have become fully engaged in V4D, forming new partnerships and collaborations, this view of global citizenship increasingly does not explain the complex formations that have evolved in V4D through the intersections of state, market and civil society.

V4D is traditionally understood as an activity that takes place when individuals render assistance that aims to improve the lives of people in the global South.<sup>3</sup> V4D aims to reduce poverty and inequality, and is primarily a phenomenon related to individuals who travel from the global North to the global South to assist in development processes and projects. There is however great diversity in V4D programmes and practices, and it is difficult to make generalisations about the phenomenon: one could look at V4D as directional (North–South, a growing South–South trend, or South-to-North), as skills transfer or community based activity (professional/diaspora V4D (see Schech et al. 2016)); or focus on duration (short or long term (i.e. Georgeou 2012)). North-to-South is historically the most studied form of V4D (Ballie Smith et al. 2018), and within this a recent trend has been towards hybrid trajectories of YV4D occurring through Northern educational institutions sending student to countries in the Global South for learning and exchange experiences in the realm of global citizenship education and global learning.

Linking all volunteer activity to notions of civil society or a global civil society is particularly problematic, because understandings of what it means to be a volunteer, and volunteering within each national context, arise from specific social, political, cultural and religious histories and experiences (Georgeou 2012: 1, 10–12; Haas 2012: 66 ff.). To complicate matters further, volunteering can also occur within for-profit areas, such as aged care settings, or state-operated sectors, such as hospitals and schools. With respect to V4D, new trajectories and hybrid organisations have emerged over the past 20 years that combine the state and the private sector, sometimes bypassing civil society groups completely, and which represent forms of hybridisation of development activity. New hybrid forms of YV4D demonstrate the new complexities and ambiguities that have emerged in V4D, rather than the traditional demarcations between civil society, the state and the market.

Critics of YV4D, especially those utilising a postcolonial approach, argue YV4D reinforces the image that the North has development solutions for the South and fails to

<sup>3</sup> The term global South is used here to refer to what were previously regarded as ‘developing countries’ to which the vast majority of international V4D programmes are targeted. We prefer global South to ‘developing countries’ as a term that more accurately reflects the shared history of colonisation and current challenges of many parts of the post-colonial world.

question colonial exploitation or unequal global power structures (Simpson 2004; Guttentag 2009; Butcher 2011). They argue YV4D sets up an image of unskilled young people as white experts “helping” the “inferior other” in the global South (Haas 2012; Haas and Repenning 2018), at the same time as enhancing the V4D participant’s cultural and economic capital with the ultimate aim of future employability and financial reward (McGloin and Georgeou 2015). North–South YV4D is an important sector of study as it often represents the first contact of young people with poverty, an experience that is shaped by, and which can itself shape, their worldview. As the workers, policy makers and business people of tomorrow, the youth of the North carry within them the future structures of power relations, at least in terms of how they see problems of poverty. As such, the design of YV4D models is critical to future social and political relations.

Most YV4D programmes can be broadly categorised as a form of experiential learning (Fowler 2008). There are many different forms of YV4D programmes, each with a different emphasis. For example some focus on international cultural experiences, others stress service learning, some offer work integrated learning in the global South in form of internships in NGOs or practicum placements in hospitals or clinics. YV4D models are thus many and varied, and our case studies illustrate three hybrid forms, however these should not be seen as the totality of either V4D or YV4D activity.

### **Capturing the Structural and Relational Logics: Towards a Theoretical Model**

In this section we introduce a model that includes two levels: First, the structural level aims to capture the organisational logics of V4D trajectories, organisations, programmes and institutions (a structuralist perspective). Second, the relational level aims to capture the symbolic order of V4D schemes, such as the interplay between power, exchange and solidarity (a post-structuralist perspective).

#### **Structure: Volunteering for Development in a ‘Plural Economy’**

The starting point of our model is the classical concept of a ‘plural economy’, rooted in the economic theory of welfare pluralism (Evers and Laville 2004; Stiglitz 2009) and based on Polanyi’s (1944) substantive approach. Civil society and the third sector are understood as the “public sphere” of voluntarily constituted institutions and encompass traditional V4D organisations such as religious and secular charities, that are separate from state, market and

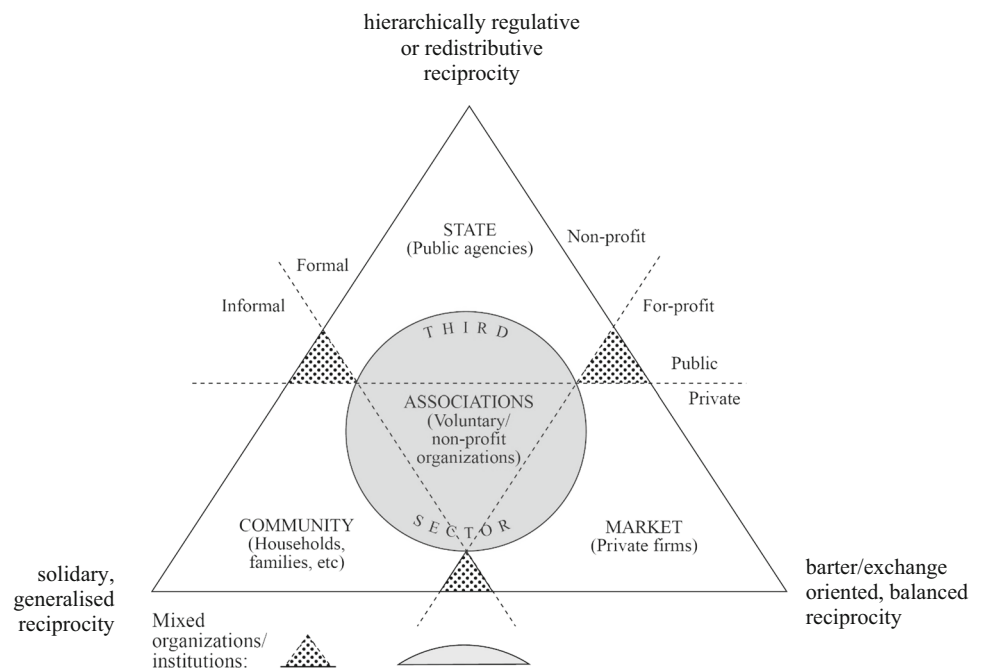
family/community. The central interface between civil society and the third sector is the level of organisation. Hence, the third sector is the organisational infrastructure of civil society in that the activity of volunteering is not directed by ‘the state’, and nor is it a commercial activity, so it is not part of ‘the market’ (Anheier et al. 2000).

Evers and Laville (2004: 17) presented a model that spans ideal types (in accordance with Max Weber) of the four sectors of this ‘plural economy’ (Fig. 1). At the same time the three poles of the state, market and family/community represent dominant principles of governance, thus different forms of reciprocity, based on Polanyi’s economic theory. The plural economy model emphasises “the fundamentally open, mixed, pluralistic and intermediary nature of the third sector” (Evers and Laville 2004: 36). In our view, this model optimally helps to theoretically capture not only the nature and position of different V4D actors and organisations, but, due to its dynamic demarcation lines, helps to analyse the current hybridisation of YV4D trajectories and the increasing influence and penetration of non-traditional V4D actors, such as governments or private firms, into various V4D trajectories.

*Community* In terms of reciprocity theory, the sphere of the community (households) are primary network structures, founded on solidarity-based generalized reciprocity. Here, actors do not expect a balanced utilitarian-oriented defined reciprocity like in the market (Schulz-Nieswandt 2008: 327). The actors are willing to establish a social and therefore not a contractual relationship. The reciprocity cycle—and here Polanyi clearly draws on Marcel Mauss (1990 [1925])—“is based on a gift calling for a counter-gift through which the groups or persons who received the first gift exercise their right to give back or not” (Evers and Laville 2004: 18). We can describe this logic as ‘solidary’ in that it represents a form of generalised reciprocity where exists generalised forms of giving and receiving over time, and between different actors, but there is no expectation of any direct returns between those actors. This form of reciprocity is opposed to the market logic, as it is inseparable from the social relationships of the actors. For example, faith-based volunteering can be seen as V4D taking place at the community level.

*State* The figuration of the state and its relationship to society as a whole can be described by the principle of hierarchically, asymmetrical (‘*herrschaftlich*’) organized reciprocity. This reciprocity is both regulative and re-distributive. Re-distribution means the expenditure of compulsory contributions (e.g. taxes) that are handed over to the central authority of the state. ‘Regulation’ means the normative legal definition of conditions of action for social actors (Schulz-Nieswandt 2008: 326). Hence, in V4D

**Fig. 1** The plural economy  
(Adapted from Evers and  
Laville 2004: 17 the welfare  
mix)



trajectories, states might intervene through funding (redistribution) or through legal frameworks that effect the activities of V4D organisations (regulation), or ultimately by setting up their own public V4D programmes, as is the case with the US Peace Corps.

**Market** The market is based on a barter and exchange-oriented, balanced type of reciprocity where the relation between the economic subjects is contractual and not social. The actors expect a direct return which can be financial, or which can come in services or goods (Evers and Laville 2004: 17, Schulz-Nieswandt 2008: 327). As we argue below voluntourism offers a market product (“development experience”) for which volunteers pay money in order to receive a certain service (the organisation of the tourism experience) in return, and therefore the logic of direct and balanced reciprocity would be predominant.

**Dynamics** The idea of the model is dynamic and flexible, which is represented by the three shiftable axes: (1) informal networks versus formal, professional organisations, (2) non-profit operating objectives versus for-profit and financial objectives, (3) public oriented action versus private, commercial oriented action. The flexibility of these axes allows us to identify trends and hybridisation processes in V4D trajectories (represented by the shaded triangles and arcs of intersection).

**The Third Sector** An intermediary sector placed in the middle of the model. Civil society organisations within this sector always combine different reciprocal logics and

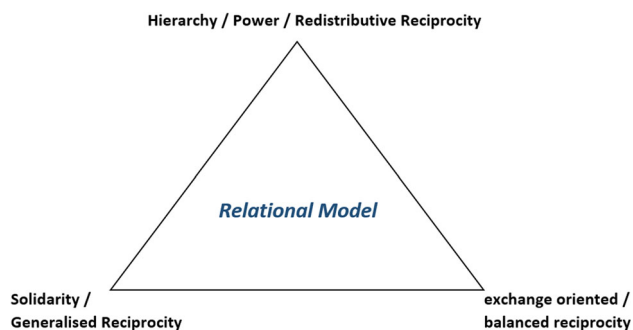
characteristics. Even though all V4D models describe themselves as “volunteering”, which has been understood as a civil society activity, some closely resemble the ideal type of a state programme, others link more with the community level, and some are strongly aligned with the market. The model will also help to show how most of these trajectories are hybrid forms, located between different sectors but combining different governance logics and forms of reciprocity.

It is important to note, that V4D connects people and organisations from different countries that interact. Hybrid forms of V4D raise the question of whether they form part of the third sector/civil society, or if they have simply incorporated and appropriated civil society discourse. The above outlined classical plural economy or welfare model will help us to situate particular V4D organisations, activities and trajectories and to show their movements within the sectors and reciprocal logics. As we will discuss in Part III, current trends in YV4D show how these axes have been pushed towards either the pole of the state or the market. We will demonstrate how different YV4D organisations and trajectories can be analysed by means of these different sectors and governance principles, and how they can then be placed within the model.

### Relations: Power, Exchange and Solidarity

Whilst in the first diagram we have attempted to locate different organisations or trajectories within a sectoral model, below we aim to capture the relationships that exist between volunteers, sending and host organisations, and

the host communities. Drawing on a different set of critical literature on V4D activities, we argue that in general, the relationships or relational order can be differentiated through three (ideal) forms and logics of reciprocity: redistributive, generalised or balanced.



We can now ask the question “By which form of reciprocity is the YV4D relationship under consideration mainly shaped?”. The response to this question will indicate which part of the relational triangle applies, and whether the YV4D activity is closer to a specific ideal type of reciprocity relationship. As explained below, the dominant organisational context shapes the relationships, and thus the types of reciprocity at play, despite the individual motivations of a volunteer.

*Hierarchy/Power/Redistributive reciprocity* The notion of the North as “aid giver” and the global South as aid “receiver” implies redistribution, however this transaction occurs with a clear superiority of North over South and with a clear hierarchy of power. Whereas the countries of the North are duty bound to provide official development assistance as part of a general programme of global development—often linked to regional interests (i.e. European States to Africa, the US to Latin America and the Caribbean, Australia and New Zealand to the Pacific)—all such aid relationships reinforce unequal global power structures. Following the advent of tied aid, where donor priorities formed the largest part of development programmes, there has been some recognition that recipients should have more influence over where the development aid is being spent. The Paris Declaration (2005) and Accra Agenda for Action (2008) (OECD: n.d.) are evidence of this. With respect to YV4D, we can ask: “Are the relationships in a certain trajectory characterized by hierarchy, power and redistributive reciprocity?” State run YV4D programmes exhibit the same logic as the broader aid sector (redistributive reciprocity), and much of the discourse focuses on the notion of the wealthy North giving to the global South. This does nothing to fundamentally disrupt or overturn a hierarchical relationship, and if anything,

the continued provision of both official development aid and state run YV4D programmes reinforce already hierarchical power dynamics.

*Exchange oriented/Balanced reciprocity* The notion of balanced reciprocity requires both partners in V4D benefiting from the experience. It implies a relationship of mutual benefit—both give and both receive, and it is clear that both want to get something out of the exchange. This may be approached through some utilitarian calculus where good is maximised, although this type of balanced reciprocity is transactional and is akin to a contract where services are supplied in exchange for a benefit. Volunteering links individuals with poor communities (the product) in exchange for a benefit (money), so both partners (individual and company) receive a benefit. In asking “Are the relationships in a certain trajectory characterized by balanced reciprocity or to what extent is the direct exchange in the foreground?”, it is worth noting that the “poor” community in which the voluntourism transaction takes place is not necessarily in the foreground as it is neither the purchaser nor the vendor; rather, the community itself becomes part of the commodity of the ‘development experience’.

*Solidarity/generalised reciprocity* Feelings of solidarity with the global South form the basis of the relationship of generalised reciprocity where the identity of the person to whom benefit will flow is essentially irrelevant. In this situation giving occurs because it is axiomatically a ‘good thing to do’ and the giver can to some extent put oneself into the receiver’s position. In the case of V4D the motivation of the volunteer in giving their time and labour centres around the desire to assist others which comes from a position of empathy with other people, or more particularly the notion that other people should also be able to enjoy their human rights (Wilde 2007). In this sense the volunteer’s labour and presence in a community becomes a ‘gift’.

Gifts that cannot be correlated directly with a previous gift or service are referred to as generalized reciprocity; in this case the relationship, not the gift itself, is the main focus. This generalisation can occur not only within a period of time, but also within groups such as generation relationships (Stegbauer 2010: 67 ff.). Schulz-Nieswandt and Köstler (2011: 150) understand the generalized form of reciprocity as a norm. In the process of giving, the recipient acquiesces to receiving a gift, even if there is no intention for the exchange to be of equal value; for example, the gift given in return may be smaller. Only if people accept this (occasional) gift surplus, can societies function, since, as they argue, it is not possible to organize the entire world

according to the principles of exchange and market (Schulz-Nieswandt et al. 2009: 46).

The notion that individuals, through their fleeting engagement with extreme poverty, can change the material conditions of people's existence has been critiqued as neglecting structural causes of poverty (Simpson 2004; Vodopivec and Jaffe 2012; McGloin and Georgeou 2015). While global civil society links clearly with the notion of solidarity, and while the political aspects of solidarity along class lines have been long clear to Marxists, the possibility for genuine solidarity between individuals in the well-off North and the poor in the global South is far less clear. This does not prevent people from attempting to effect change in a variety of ways, and with no expectation of direct return. As a result, there are generalised forms of giving and receiving that result from notions and motivations of solidarity, both individual and collective. With respect to YV4D we can ask "Are the relationships in a certain trajectory characterized by solidarity and generalised reciprocity?", as different forms of reciprocity can overlap, or can be in conflict with each other.

We posit that our theoretical model using ideal types helps to sort out different forms and levels of actor relationships, as well as the specific logics of reciprocity. This can help to untangle many of the blurred lines that have evolved with the emergence of hybrid forms of V4D. In the model we propose no sector is static, and all sectors influence each other.

### Case Studies: Locating New Hybrid YV4D Forms and Trajectories

Below we apply our model to three different YV4D trajectories to unpack the relationships and types of reciprocity involved, so as to elucidate the complexities of contemporary trajectories of YV4D. Each of the three trajectories is considered in its (1) structure and (2) relational aspects to demonstrate how working with a calculus of forms of reciprocity may be more revealing than attempting to locate a new YV4D trajectory within a specific sector in a static manner.

#### Australian Universities and YV4D

##### *Structure: State, Market and NGOs*

Many universities around the world have prioritised internationalisation programmes as part of their attractiveness to potential and exiting students. A new trajectory of international student mobility is the tendency to send domestic students abroad in order to give students an 'international experience'. Australia is one of the leading

countries for outbound student mobility. The launch of Australia's New Colombo Plan (NCP) scholarship programme in December 2013 reflects a trend aligning outbound student mobility with Australia's economic and political interest (Gribble and Tran 2016: 5).

In terms of YV4D Universities have responded to the government's commitment to fund student mobility (up to \$3000 in grants per student) by integrating faculty-led volunteering into formal curricula, and providing academic credit for international experience programmes. Not all of these programmes are YV4D, but with a significant increase in overall mobility there are many new and emerging engagements that do involve V4D components. In 2016 the number of outbound students rose to 44,045, an increase of 15.5% in just 1 year. The Indo Pacific countries prioritised by the NCP are the destinations of 39% of all students (both undergraduate and post graduate) participating in outbound mobility programmes (DET 2018).

Universities view the management and coordination of student outbound mobility programmes as resource intensive, so a significant trend in Australian tertiary institutions has been the use of Third Party Providers (TPPs) to place students in global mobility projects (Molony 2011: 217; Malicki 2013: 6). TPPs are most commonly private companies that broker and sell development volunteering and internships with NGOs (or so called 'social enterprises') in the global South (Malicki 2013: 6). In 2013 it was estimated there were in excess of 80 TPPs active in Australia (Malicki 2013: 6) including companies with formal partnership agreements with one or more tertiary institutions. Some of the more well-established YV4D companies included: Antipodeans Abroad; CISAustralia; International Student Volunteers (ISV); 40K Globe (2019); and VOICE (Volunteers In Community Engagement—formally Youth Challenge Australia). Malicki (2013) further noted that university international offices are often unaware of the extent of the outbound activities and programmes being promoted around their institutions.

Australia's universities are already predominately state funded, so this form of YV4D can be located within the sphere of activity of 'the state' as it provides both grants and loans to students and funding to the institutions. Universities sub-contracting for-profit TPPs to manage their outbound students represents the involvement of 'the market', and TPPs placing university YV4D students with NGOs or non-profit organisations in the global South is evidence of links with 'civil society' in Asia. The previous societal schema of state, market and civil society is no longer able to adequately describe how university YV4D is located.

### *Relations: State and Market Over Community*

As universities engage TPPs to facilitate the outbound student experience, they remove themselves from direct in-depth engagement with organisations and institutions in the host country and in the process they create a transactional relationship of balanced reciprocity. The relationship between the University and the TPP is the dominant model,<sup>4</sup> but there are also transactional relations between the state and the University, the state and the student, and (hopefully) between the TPP and host organisations or a host community.

Contrary to the official view that such exchanges provide the opportunity for young Australians to practice their acquired skills to become more “Asia-literate and Asia-capable” (Hawksley and Georgeou 2013: 268), we argue that the placement experiences are based on exchange orientated transactional reciprocity between the state-funded University and the TPP and do not contribute to the development of host communities. The nature of the experiences does not facilitate the sort of reciprocal partnerships necessary for effective development or mutual learning, nor does it enable the development of relationships of mutuality and solidarity considered essential to effective partnership. Rather, the practices of Australian University YV4D form part of a public pedagogy that dehistoricises processes of development in Asia, the effect of which is to reinforce the structural inequality of global capitalism in favour of a de-politicised understanding of poverty and development.

### **The German YV4D Programme *weltwärts***

#### *Structure: State Influence Through Public Funding*

The German YV4D programme *weltwärts* was introduced in 2007 by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ 2014). It was the first substantial funding scheme for international volunteering in Germany. The ministry provides 75% of funding and 25% has to be raised from civil society sources. A coordination office to manage funding and quality assurance was established within Engagement Global (gGmbH), the central contact agency in Germany for civil society development policy

initiatives. It is a 100% subsidiary (non-profit) company of the Ministry. Around 180 NGOs are currently registered with the coordination office to function as sending organisations within the scheme. These sending organisations come from very different backgrounds, such as international youth exchange, religion, environment, or development.

The German sending organisations have to have a local partner organisation that will act as a host organisation for the volunteers. Hence, the programme is based on the relationships of German NGOs, mostly with NGOs in the receiving countries, although in some cases the host organisation is a public entity or a private organisation. Since the first group of (North–South) *weltwärts* volunteers left Germany for their service, almost 40,000 volunteers have followed, or approximately 3500 volunteers per year. The programme’s target group is young adults aged between 18 and 28. Around 90% are younger than 22, and most of them are from an upper middle class background. The assignment period varies between 6 and 24 months, however the average assignment period is 12 months (BMZ 2014:3). In 2013 *weltwärts* introduced a South–North component that allows young adults from receiving countries to assign for a *weltwärts* service in Germany. The number of incoming *weltwärts* volunteers was intended to increase up to 600 by 2017.

When *weltwärts* was introduced by the development ministry the programme was explicitly designed for this variety of small and larger NGOs which already had experience in the field. A public agency that was first involved as one of the biggest sending organisations, the Deutsche Entwicklungsdienst (DED), ceased to work with the programme in 2013. Ever since, only NGOs are operating as *weltwärts* sending organisations. To gain access to the funding scheme, NGOs not only have to register with the coordination office but also to affiliate with a quality association and to acquire a quality certification by one of the officially recognised certification agencies for volunteer services. Based on one major government document called “funding guidelines” NGOs can then apply on a yearly basis for funding, depending on the number of volunteers it would like to send to the global South (or to receive through the South–North component).

Even though the ‘state’ through *weltwärts* has finally addressed *weltwärts* NGOs’ continuous call for public funding for YV4D, and it now provides a very concrete possibility for civil society stakeholders to take part in decision making through a joint (ministry and civil society) steering committee, NGOs are increasingly concerned about a seemingly overbearing state (Fischer and Haas 2014). Hence, new questions regarding the relationship between civil society and the state emerged in Germany and have triggered a controversial debate. *Weltwärts* is

<sup>4</sup> There are of course exceptions to this general trend, for example Australian Catholic University (ACU) works closely with TPP Ayana Journeys which emphasizes ethical engagement through cultural exchange and education, while Western Sydney University (WSU) School of Social Sciences and Psychology engages in direct partnerships based on balanced reciprocity and solidarity with NGOs and partner universities in developing countries. One of the authors of this paper has contributed to the development of both of these institutional approaches.



viewed by NGOs as very much “regulated” and the extent of state control is perceived as particularly dominant. For instance, the state regulation went so far that the BMZ installed a national point of contact in various countries. This instrument was accepted, albeit unwillingly, by civil society stakeholders as it created a structure of direct access on the programme level in the host countries.

Analysing the state influence within *weltwärts* on various levels, Fischer and Haas (2014) have shown how *weltwärts* is closely connected to the state in the areas of funding, management and ownership. The question of ownership has emerged as particularly relevant in relation to hybridisation processes within V4D as a civil society activity. The question of to whom a volunteer service actually ‘belongs’, arose when the ‘state’ labelled *weltwärts* “volunteer service of the Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development” (italics by the authors). The concept of ownership has much to do with “perceived” ownership and can therefore be linked to the question how strongly the state is present in the communication of the programme in the public. Through introducing a brand or label, *weltwärts* has influenced volunteers’ sense of identity—they now see themselves first as volunteers of *weltwärts*, and not as volunteers of the NGO the applied at in order to participate in the programme. These mechanisms of state control and governance structures made it particularly difficult for civil society organisations to maintain and define their own goals within V4D, which was the case before the introduction of *weltwärts* and the state’s claims of ownership and policy making. The state provides funding and exerts influence on other actors however there is no market logic involved.

#### *Relations: Ambivalences of Reciprocity*

Haas (2012: 83ff.) has argued that due to the role of NGOs at the implementation level and the non-interference of ‘the market’, generalised forms of reciprocity are deeply anchored in the logic of *weltwärts*, thus transcending time periods, and with the involvement of individual persons the volunteers become the medium for a number of gift processes.

These processes, however, are full of ambivalences both on the macro and the micro levels; ambivalences that bring the relations of reciprocity out of balance, even making the YV4D trajectory into an instrument of neo-colonial patterns of thought and behaviour. A symmetrical relationship of exchange between the programme organisers in the global North and the receiving organisations in the South is only constructed through discourse. In practice, there is a clear sense of superiority and a claim to sovereignty over matters of interpretation in the global North, so we discern

a more hierarchical approach is dominant as colonial images and positions are reproduced through the clear programmatic dividing line that separates the givers and the receivers.

Through the logic and the branding of the programme, the people of the global South are trapped in their old roles. Helping and learning are, in the post-colonial situation, subject to certain patterns and constraints that do not disappear in a simple intercultural encounter, rather they continue to evoke asymmetries in gift and reciprocity relations (for further elaboration see Haas 2012).

#### **Voluntourism**

##### *Structure: The Commercial Exchange*

As a form of V4D, Voluntourism combines overseas travel with volunteering in communities and covers a diverse range of humanitarian, environmental and cultural restoration activities (Wearing 2001, p. 1). Voluntourism has a gendered dimension and is targeted to young people—most voluntourists are aged between 20 and 29 years, and 80% of these are young women (TRAM 2008). Critiques of V4D generally have documented: problems with volunteer tourism, service learning models, and international development ‘industries’ (Grusky 2000; Stoecker and Tyron 2009; Tomazos and Cooper 2012); V4D’s neo-colonial affects, including dependency (Simpson 2004; Guttentag 2009; Haas 2012; Vrsti 2013); the commodification of poverty and indigenous peoples, especially children, who provide photogenic backdrops to adventure travel (Hickel 2013; Reas 2013; McGloin and Georgeou 2015); and the rise of companies selling V4D itself as a commodity (Higgins-Desboilles and Russell-Mundine 2008; Sharp and Dear 2013).

Voluntourism is principally facilitated by for-profit organisations based in the global North that benefit financially from sending others to developing countries and communities (McGloin and Georgeou 2015; Tomazos and Cooper 2012). Short-term (from a few days to a few weeks) volunteer tourism activities are more popular than longer-term placements (6–12 months) (Lyons and Wearing 2008). This is significant as Callanan and Thomas (2005) argue that the shorter the time devoted to the project, the more likely self-interest is prioritized over altruistic concern for the host community or project. The proliferation of orphanages in Cambodia and Nepal to satisfy the demand of Westerners who want to work with poor children (Reas 2013) is one example, and Daley (2013: 376–377) argues that voluntourists, and the enterprises that place them, are actually complicit in the commodification of humanitarianism. In this view, the poor in the global South, and

poverty itself, become commodities to be enjoyed within a global neoliberal economy.

Tourism became linked to poverty alleviation in the 1990s when at the 1992 Rio Summit economic development was integrated into the discourse of sustainability (Goodwin 2009; Hall 2007: 112–114; Harrison 2008: 851). One result was the emergence of ‘pro-poor tourism’ (PPT) during this period, which reflected an interest in the relationship between development and poverty reduction strategies. The object of PPT was to link the elimination of poverty to the broader tourism industry, and advocates argued that as tourism is a significant or growing economic sector in most countries, PPT could make a significant contribution to the eradication of poverty (Goodwin 2009: 90; Telfer and Sharpley 2008: 2). PPT was framed as an ‘alternative’ approach to mainstream tourism development models (Chok et al. 2007: 144) that were criticized as growth oriented development, and as pushing modernisation and urbanisation. Humanitarian and human rights critiques however argued that mainstream tourism development approaches denied people participation in their own development and the opportunity to manage changes in their communities.

Significantly, a central component of PPT’s strategy relied on harnessing the private sector to alleviate poverty (Goodwin 2009: 90–92; McGloin and Georgeou 2015: 5). The idea of engaging the market intersected with a growing consumer rejection of mass tourism as having negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts on the travel destination or country. The PPT rhetoric was taken up by community-based organisations (CBOs) in an attempt to attract tourists to their communities to spend money.<sup>5</sup> It was also embraced by commercial tourism operators based in the global North who positioned the activity as an alternative to mass tourism, and then marketed tourism packages with volunteer experiences in disadvantaged communities as having a positive impact on host communities (Coghlan and Noakes 2012; Guttentag 2012; McGloin and Georgeou 2015: 5; Smith and Font 2014; Tomazos 2010)

Voluntourism represents a growing sector of the tourism industry (Wright 2013: 240–241). Accurate statistics on voluntourism are difficult to obtain as the sector is unregulated. A 2008 study of 300 voluntourism organisations by the independent British consultancy, Tourism Research and Marketing (TRAM 2008), estimated the voluntourism industry was then worth up to US\$2.6 billion worldwide, and involved an estimated 1.6 million people from Western

countries—Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand—travelling overseas to volunteer each year.

The packaging of experiences, and increased accessibility to information and links to other tourism sectors (Wright 2013: 240–241) means that, ironically, the activity of voluntourism is now considered a ‘mass niche’ of the tourism market (Callanan and Thomas 2005), even though volunteer tourism companies position themselves as an ethical alternative to mass tourism. By using phrases such as ‘giving back’ and ‘making a difference’ (Smith and Font 2014) the companies draw upon discourses of mutual reciprocity, global civil society and community, however further examination of voluntourism reveals that its origins and logics lie squarely within the market.

### *Relations: Balanced Reciprocity*

Several relationships exist between actors engaged in voluntourism that highlight the difficulty of locating this V4D activity within a traditional state/market/community division of society. In terms of the exchange between provider (company) and consumer (voluntourist), voluntourism clearly represents exchange reciprocity, however participants within voluntourism might see their actions as generalised reciprocity. Even though proponents want to ‘do good’ and ‘give back’, they do so within an economic and cultural environment where there is a clear neoliberal logic of consumer behaviour in the marketplace, and of economic laws. The motivation to ‘help’ is consumer desire (demand), which is met by companies who facilitate travel to exotic locations, and to communities living in poverty (supply). In this paradigm an exchange of money allows the consumer to experience personal growth through engaging with poverty, and to act on their desire to help, and the company is meant to provide access to the poor community and to make all the travel arrangements. The result is balanced reciprocity between consumer and company within the sphere of the market.

### **New V4D Trajectories, Reciprocity and the Consequences for Civil Society**

In this section we link V4D with aspects of the social theory of the gift and reciprocity. Since V4D locates itself within a discourse of development, a focus is put on the act of ‘helping’ in regard to asymmetrical reciprocity relations. We contend that the lens of reciprocity theory is particularly helpful in analysing the logics that underpin these new trajectories of V4D, and the relationships they foster.

The social theory of gift and reciprocity is ultimately linked to the question of whether people act in a rational manner—conceptualised via the well-known idea of

<sup>5</sup> Many of these organisations first emerged in the 1970s and early 1980s within the context of the call from developing countries for a New International Economic Order as small-scale projects that involved a high degree of participation by the local population. Examples include solidarity tours (Pearce 1992: 18).

classical economic theory of *homo economicus* (economic man)—or whether they are social and altruistic beings by nature. For example, are young people who engage in YV4D activities benefit-maximizers who go on ‘egotrips to misery’ (Töpfl 2008)? One answer lies in an anthropologically rooted definition of ‘altruism’. Adloff (2010: 28) describes altruism as a behaviour which favours others, even if for the actors themselves it involves or may involve a loss of benefaction. If both sides profit from the action, then we are no longer dealing with altruism. Following Schulz-Nieswandt and Köstler (2011), we utilise an anthropological understanding that does not equate individuality with egoism. Rather, we understand altruism in more nuanced social terms: ‘Altruism as an expression of an interest in fellow human beings, is however a concern of the person, and thus part of the unit of the personal system, and thus an integrated component of the personal self-image’ (Schulz-Nieswandt and Köstler 2011: 77). This definition is deduced from the realisation that how people behave is always to be understood ‘in the context of social relations and normative context of purpose’ (Schulz-Nieswandt and Köstler 2011: 78 f.).

There is no doubt that YV4D participants profit from their service, especially if it is intended to result in future employment, but if each voluntary assignment is at the same time a learning process, which does not exclude self-interest, can YV4D be considered altruistic? Following the anthropological understanding of altruism, humans are always to be understood in the context of their social relations, thus every human action should be understood as a social action. On an individual level however, the question centres on whether humans find a healthy balance between acting out of self-interest and their own principles and public spirit (Schulz-Nieswandt et al. 2009: 35).

The same question can be asked of YV4D programmes generally. Haas (2012: 57 ff.) has shown that the aims and the promoted discourse of YV4D programmes has an influence on how the participating volunteers conceptualize their personal aims and role within the activities. For example, YV4D activities are placed within a development discourse that promises participants the opportunity ‘to make a difference in people’s lives’ and to ‘help the poor’, those involved are very likely to adopt and to take on this discourse. For example, voluntourism uses the discourse of ‘making a difference’ as it markets its combination of adventure among photogenic ‘others’ with an appeal to the civic minded to engage in ‘development’ to end poverty. The acquisition of social and cultural capital is marketed as helping students secure jobs in the future as in theory it demonstrates civic virtue and global experience (McGloin and Georgeou 2015; Smith and Font 2014).

Helping can be understood as a ‘gift’. Following Mauss (1990) gift theory helps to identify several problematic

aspects that emerge from such a developmental or ‘helping’ paradigm within V4D activities. Giving a gift is for Mauss a deeply ambiguous process, one which cannot be explained economically by self-interest or moralistically as purely altruistic giving (Adloff 2010: 42). Mauss stressed that a gift on the one hand constitutes reciprocity, but it also always goes along with an obligation, which arises for the receivers, to reciprocate the gift (Mauss 1990: 4 f.). This obligation later became the subject of frequent scientific debate. Following Mauss, Caillé (2006: 182) describes the gift as its own paradigm: it is free and mandatory, simultaneously being comprised of self-interest and unselfishness. It is mandatory, as someone must decide to cooperate; yet because violating the reciprocity rule can cause social sanctions, it is voluntary as nobody is forced to give. A duality thus underlies this understanding. Gift and reciprocity have their own logics which include a social component; they cannot be reduced to an economic exchange, but have a deeper symbolic meaning. As Adloff (2010: 34) notes ‘The dichotomy of interest and moral is transcended or rather becomes indistinguishable by the effect of the gift as an initiator of social reciprocity’.

The service and activities of Australian University YV4D participants in Asia cannot be attributed to egoism or altruism as explanatory paradigms. Instead, the mutuality processes must be analysed, as this is brought about by the service of the volunteers and their help or support in their places of assignment. For YV4D this raises questions about the nature of the exchange. While there are innumerable forms of exchange, which can all differ, there are nonetheless some basic rules and forms that can be represented and compared. The most relevant for this paper is that advanced by Stegbauer (2010: 14 f.) that concerns *generalized reciprocity*.

The notion of generalized reciprocity is particularly pertinent when analysing North–South relations with respect to differentiating between solidarity and charity. In principle humans help each other, because, it is assumed, they hope that when in need others will help them. Albert rightfully asks whether according to this conception the recipients of the assistance are actually exonerated or ‘more likely remain in a position of dependence’ (Albert 2010: 207). Various authors therefore suggest a clear differentiation between the terms solidarity and charity. “Solidarity relations are based on symmetrical reciprocity and live on the basic reversibility of the giver-receiver relationship. Charity [...] on the other hand is based primarily on the inequality of an asymmetrically functioning reciprocity” (Adloff 2010: 53). Charity cements social positions (Stegbauer 2010: 81). If one applies the principle of generalized reciprocity to V4D activities, one important question that emerges is ‘are they conceptualized as charity or solidarity?’ For example, voluntourism adopts a

discourse of ‘helping’, thus reinforcing existing global inequalities between rich and poor, and aligning more closely with charity (and therefore away from solidarity).

Social roles can also be connected with the principle of reciprocity. A role means the actions and attitudes that are typically expected from a position. Roles are both assigned by the environment, and fulfilled by the actors who act according to social and cultural roles. This happens to a varying extent depending on the role pattern (Stegbauer 2010: 93 ff.). In the case of reciprocity, it is about the mutual expectation of the fulfilment of expectations connected with the role, i.e. the ‘expectation of expectation’. A certain role always has a counterpart, which accepts the role as such. These role expectations have an effect on relationships, and they differ from culture to culture (Stegbauer 2010: 96 f.). There are automatically assigned roles which have external attributes (e.g. age and sex), and acquired roles (e.g. occupation).

As we have tried to show in brief, processes of giving and receiving are deeply ambivalent—especially in the context of development, aid, charity and volunteering. A symmetrical relationship of exchange and solidarity between organisers of volunteer activities and the receiving organisations in the global South is only constructed through dialogic and discussion.

We have argued university YV4D placement experiences are based on transactional (i.e. exchange) reciprocity between the State/University and the TPP. The host community is seen as an opportunity for students to learn, so rather than a reciprocity based around giving it can in fact be conceptualised as one of taking. The nature of the experience does not facilitate the sort of reciprocal partnerships necessary for effective development, nor does it enable the development of relationships of mutuality and solidarity considered essential to partnership.

Voluntourism packages are sold on the idea of ‘helping’ or ‘giving back’. That is, people feel compassion ‘for’, rather than solidarity ‘with’, the poor and marginalised, and they feel they should act on that feeling to make things better, and to demonstrate that they are ethical consumers/citizens (Muehleback 2012). Indeed, the ‘ethical consumer’ requires inequality so as to demonstrate their compassion within the marketplace, and global inequality facilitates ‘individual heroic acts’ of compassion by the volunteer. Such a model of ‘helping’ others develop assumes that a conveyor belt of individual compassionate acts builds global cohesion, and that this leads to social change and development. The result is a public pedagogy that altruistic young people can help in the modernisation of a country through short-term engagement with development processes. The focus becomes fixed on the symptoms of social inequality, rather than its root causes, and the emphasis is on tackling short-term and individual issues, rather than on underlying structural inequalities

(Simpson 2004; Eikenberry 2009; Nickel and Eikenberry 2009, 2013; Rochester 2013).

Scholars of voluntarism argue that such developments reflect a shift in volunteer motivations from an emphasis on fulfilling a social need, toward individualized and instrumentalised self-fulfilment. Simpson (2004) found that this shift was most certainly occurring in the case of volunteer tourism, which generally requires little individual time commitment, and involves predominantly unskilled labour (McGloin and Georgeou 2015: 4), and that the emphasis is on individual advancement which fails to ‘engage in the structural relationships between communities of the developed and developing world’ (Simpson 2004: 689).

## Conclusions

We have argued that new YV4D trajectories are complex and hybrid, and that they no longer exist entirely within civil society. The influences of the state on V4D is older than that of the market, but both are clearly engaged in new YV4D trajectories. The evolving combinations of interest and the different relational logics and expectations in operation require new questions to understand the dynamics at play, questions focused on the expectations of reciprocity that mediate relationships between actors in the development process. Our three YV4D case studies cover redistributive reciprocity (*welwants*), and exchange reciprocity (both university YV4D and voluntourism). We conclude that generalised reciprocity (solidarity) is harder to locate within new trajectories of YV4D due to the intrusion of neoliberal market logic of exchange, along with political ideologies and state interests. This is a significant finding as it demonstrates the individual logic of neoliberalism may have eroded the solidarity and reciprocity inherent in traditional notions of volunteering, particularly in V4D.

New YV4D trajectories claim to empower both local communities and individuals within them. They create altered power hierarchies in terms of exchanges and the relationships taking place. The result is an embedding of a normalising logic of neoliberal consumerism and consumption, now applied to the products of poverty and underdevelopment. The model we have suggested has adopted a lens of reciprocity to take us away from the state/market/community approach and to concentrate more on the quality and type of reciprocity taking place. The concentration on the notion of the gift has assisted in highlighting the potential for expectation to come from actions. What is clear is that new trajectories of YV4D require new theoretical frameworks to understand what they claim, seek to achieve, and actually do achieve. We hope the model we have advanced is a small step towards moving from a state/market/civil society understanding of

YV4D to a more nuanced assessment based on the type of reciprocity expressed. This would be an important development for global social justice, equality of opportunity and the construction of future exchange and YV4D programmes in terms of their modalities. Applications of our model to emerging YV4D (and indeed V4D) trajectories will enable us to locate the closest underlying logic, and therefore the nature of the exchanges taking place.

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#### Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of interest** The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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