1

TOURISM CRITICAL PRACTICE:

ACTIVATING DREAMS INTO ACTION

25th – 28th June 2013

Sarajevo, Bosnia & Herzegovina

LET'S SAY GOODBYE: THE MORALISING PRACTICES OF

GAP YEAR ORGANISATIONS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Inge Hermann

Saxion University of Applied Sciences

Handelskade 75 | 7400 AM | Deventer | The Netherlands

T: +31 (0)570-603591 | E: i.hermann@saxion.nl

Abstract: Responding to the growing appeal of the gap year amongst young people, the higher education sector, governmental institutions and, perhaps foremost, the tourism industry are increasingly starting to realise the potential of promoting tourism as an arena with moral status and codes, influencing society and individual lives in 'new', different and powerful ways. Due to this burgeoning global and identifiable gap year industry, the network of public and private organisations, support services, practices and beliefs has become increasingly open to scrutiny. This paper aims to contribute to a new research agenda exploring the broader cultural influence of the gap year industry in the Netherlands through a discourse analysis of online resources targeting young people. In particular, the paper explores the moralising practices of gap year organisations involved in promoting, negotiating and regulating new moral values and meanings of, and through, tourism. The paper concludes with a critical impression of how these organisations claim to offer a more distinctive way of reflection, and thereby contribute to negative and narrowed views on mass tourism and, in all likelihood, a distorted sense of global citizenship amongst young people.

Key words: gap year, tourism, discourse, representations, moralisation, values.

THE GAP YEAR: AN INTRODUCTION

Travel has been a contested arena with an extended and political history through which to pursue one's "colonial ambition, missionary zeal and the scientific pursuit and control of knowledge" (Simpson, 2004b: 21). These (historical) legacies, particularly the rise of the 'year out' in the 1960s and 70s, often used to travel the 'hippie trails' in Asia, have continued to influence and frame the contemporary gap year (Butcher, 1993, Simpson, 2003; Griffith, 2003). Originating from missionary values such as 'civilisation' and 'converting', and the educational values of the Grand Tours from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century to 'broaden the minds' of Western Europe's noble youth (Simpson, 2004b; Heath, 2007; King, 2007), the majority of contemporary gap year programmes still involve some form of teaching, medical work and identity construction. Additionally, the philanthropic (and

military) activities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, based on combining humanitarian efforts (and warfare) with travel and sightseeing, are still popular gap year activities for contemporary 'volunteers' from developed countries in undeveloped 'third world' countries. Although critics of these liminal experiences have been around since the days of the Grand Tour, the modern-day version of the gap year is similarly disputed for its articulation, legitimation and maintenance of a set of 'truths' about the way global relations and dichotomies are understood and practised (Simpson, 2004b, Huxley, 2005; Snee, 2013).

Recent critical accounts (see for example Lyons, Hanley, Wearing and Neil, 2011; Snee, 2013) have led to tensions in defining the gap year phenomenon in a contemporary setting. Although the term 'gap year' is relatively new and corresponds with the growing numbers of young people in the last 25 years taking a 'year out', it is still widely ill-defined and ambiguous (Jones, 2004: 22-23). Although the amount of academic literature has been slowly increasing over the last decade, based on the extensive account by Jones (2004) there is already an abundance of definitions of the gap year. Some scholars, such as Simpson (2003; 2004a, 2004b) and Heath (2007), have provided a rather tight description of a gap year as a period of time when young people travel, often abroad, and are engaged in a range of activities, including various combinations of (organised) paid and unpaid work, leisure and travel. Jones (2004: 24) has added that the intersubjective phrase 'gap year', actually does not refer to those taking a 12-month break, but includes "any period of time between 3 and 24 months in which an individual takes 'time out' from formal education, training or the workplace." Additionally, although King (quoted in Milne, Kennedy and Ward, 2009: 1) describes this period poetically as the "zone of transition", meaning a transition between one stage of life and the next, Cremin (2007: 526) has added that a gap year is not only a break or transition from education or formal employment, but is also seen as "an unusual place in the subject's biography…for having career and educational benefits". This indicates that, although a gap year is a nominal period, it sits within the context of a longer career trajectory (Jones, 2004; Snee, 2013). Other social scientific research has tended to focus on the gap year as an individualised form of life planning (Bagnoli, 2009) through which

young people reflexively construct a sense of identity (Riley, 1988; Desforges, 1998; Bagnoli, 2009) and map out their social class positioning and personal constraints (Simpson, 2005; Heath, 2007; MacDonald and Marsh, 2005; Molgat, 2007). For the purpose of this paper, a gap year corresponds to a specific, transitional period of 'time out' between school and university, spent abroad, including activities of independent travel, leisure and/or (organised) work placements.

As taking a gap year is becoming an increasingly common practice in Western, and particularly European, countries, volunteering, working and travelling overseas during a specific period of time has become a recognisable, identifiable part of (Western) society, and is especially noticeable within the UK. The phenomenon of taking 'time out' is increasingly being encouraged, marketed and researched by the education sector, government and an expanding gap year industry. In the Netherlands also, the gap year is, although lower in numbers, becoming increasingly popular amongst young people. Nuffic (2012), the Dutch organisation for international cooperation in the higher education sector, stated that in 2011 approximately 9% of 134,000 Dutch first-year students took a gap year prior to enrolling at a University. The percentage of students who travel abroad increased from 2.4% in 2008 to 2.8% in 2009, before declining to 2.6% in 2011, due to debates in parliament about study grants and loans. Despite this slight decrease in 2011, Nuffic (2012) estimates that this number will continue to increase again from 2013 onwards.

Responding to the growing interest in the gap year experience in the Netherlands, and wider consumer trends towards a more moral lifestyle and consumption patterns, the higher education sector, governmental institutions and, perhaps foremost, the tourism industry in the Netherlands are increasingly starting to realise the potential of promoting the idea of 'being ethical' and 'doing good' for others and the environment (Donyadide, 2010; Goodwin and Francis, 2003; Holden, 2003; Kalisch, 2002). Currently, there are around 15 organisations based in the Netherlands that offer (overseas) activities, ranging from paid working opportunities to leisure activities, travel packages, volunteering positions or a combination of these activities. Some organisations, for example the Real Gap Experience,

offer paid work packages, whilst the majority, such as Livingstone and Commundo Reizen, seems to promote unpaid or subsidised volunteering positions as part of their programme. Although there are no gap year organisations that exclusively target young people taking a gap year prior to university, for some, such as Projects Abroad, this seems to be one of their primary target groups. Furthermore, travel agencies, such as Green Canyon and Tunafish, have started offering flexible, structured and tailored gap year packages alongside their 'traditional' tourism packages. The growing market of gap year organisations, travel agencies and other tourism-related groups offering gap year programmes, (packaged) activities and a variety of (related) services is also visible at annual education fairs and through promotion tours at secondary schools. Although there are no gap year travel books published in Dutch yet, there is an increasing number of English guidebooks available through Dutch (online) bookshops that target the market of young gappers; for example, 'The Gap-year Guidebook' (Barnes, 2012) and 'Your Gap Year' (Griffiths, 2011). Furthermore, there are several Dutch one-stop websites, such as Weg Wijs (www.weg-wijs.net), which provide practical advice about the gap year (Heath, 2005). Also, within the media there is a growing coverage of gap year (related) news items and programmes, and, although the attention is not solely focused on the 'gap year', Dutch television programmes such as 'Bestemming Onbekend' (translated as 'Destination Unknown') do nourish the perceived 'value' of the gap year experience (www.tvblik.nl, translated by the author):

> Klaas Kruistum and Manuel Venderbos [TV presenters] confront unsuspecting young people at Dutch airports with the question: Would you exchange your ticket... for the most confrontational journey of your life? For an entire week young people are confronted with a totally different world than their own… Young people who are predominantly engaged in partying, shopping and friends are put to work to make a difference to someone thousands of miles away who lives in the most appalling conditions. After the trip, their view of the world changed completely!

With the expansion of the gap year industry, there has also been some indication of a move towards regulation. In 1990, several Dutch organisations, aiming at exchange programmes with a particular focus on high school programmes for young people between the ages of 15-18, formed the foundation 'Stichting Platform Intercultureel Leren' (SPIL). The foundation became operational in 2009 and acts as an umbrella organisation which aims 'to raise public attention and awareness of the effects of an educational exchange year' (www.intercultureelleren.nl, translated by the author). Furthermore, the foundation has raised concerns about the transparency of the market due to the rising numbers of exchange organisations and aims 'to develop quality criteria to compare exchange organisations' and 'to receive financial and idealistic support from the government to initiate and get recognition for long-term exchange programmes for young people irrespective of their financial situation' (www.intercultureelleren.nl, translated by the author).

Nourishing a rapidly expanding and identifiable gap year market (Heath, 2005), the network of public and private organisations, support services, practices and beliefs has become increasingly open to scrutiny. With this paper, I aim to contribute to a new research agenda exploring the broader cultural work of the gap year industry that targets young people in the Netherlands. The paper commences with a review of the moralising practices of tourism, and specifically the gap year, by a niche industry in tourism that aims to promote, negotiate and regulate new moral values and meanings of, and through, gap year tourism. The paper then outlines the use of discourse analysis as a methodology and the sorts of claims that can be made using online sources. Consequently, I work towards a deconstruction of the moralising representations and practices of and within the gap year discourse and provide an insight into the gap year industry. I conclude with a critical impression of how the industry claims to offer a more distinctive way of reflection according to set codes of predefined purposes, and thereby contributes to negative and narrowed views on the gap year and (mass) tourism and a distorted sense of global citizenship amongst young people.

MORALISATION AND GAP YEAR TRAVEL: THE CASE OF THE NETHERLANDS

Although the gap year as a phenomenon has been of growing interest to researchers (O'Shea, 2011), focusing mainly on more visible forms such as 'volunteer tourism' (Simpson, 2004a; Söderman and Snead, 2008; Palacios, 2010), 'backpacker or gap-backer tourism' (O'Reilly, 2005, 2006) or the individuals' experiences (Snee, 2013), little is still known about the process and practices of gap year 'moralisation' done by a range of public, civil society and commercial organisations. Following Rozin (1999), moralisation is the rather common [reversible] process by which objects or activities that were previously morally neutral acquire a moral component both on an individual level and within society. Moralisation converts preferences into values, and in doing so influences cross-generational transmission, increases the likelihood of internalisation, invokes greater emotional response, and mobilises the support of governmental and other cultural institutions. More specifically, within the moralisation processes, previously unstigmatised tourist behaviour, based on personal choice or preference, is no longer considered pleasurable, no longer even tempting, but rather is seen as disgraceful, or even disgusting (Rozin, 1999).

From a historical perspective, according to Pieterman and Hanekamp (2002), moral guidelines in tourism and several other spheres in Western societies have moved from a 'risk society', where ultimately damage could not be avoided, to a more 'precautionary culture' where "damage is [primarily] not due to individual carelessness but should be seen as [the] undesired side effects of industry, economy or any other social system" (2002: 36). Hence, and currently visible in many Western societies, Pieterman and Hanekamp (2002) argue, this could lead to a 'cautious society, which would be risk-averse, economically stagnant and with visible social tensions and political struggles.

Resultantly, following moral concerns of body and health, such as smoking and eating meat (Rozin, Markwith and Stoess, 1997; Rozin and Singh, 1997), tourism, which was once regarded as a neutral area of individual choice and behaviour, has become highly moralised on an almost global scale over the last few decades. As Butcher (2003: 17) argues, this process of moralisation in (and through) tourism has resulted in the rise of a "New Moral

Tourism", which characterises mass tourism as crude and destructive while imposing a "moral high ground" within tourism and encouraging people to travel with a sense of personal mission – to save the world. Tourism in this regard is being (re-)invented as an arena with moral status and codes, influencing society and individual lives in 'new', different and powerful ways. Per se, travelling is increasingly charged by the industry with moral codes, such as the need to 'engage with culture', 'respect diversity', 'support diversity' and 'make a difference', and behaviour related to pleasure, fun, relaxation, hedonism and adventure is increasingly being perceived as undesirable and immoral. Instead, a range of public, civil society and commercial organisations has started to advocate more 'sensitive' touristic behaviour towards local cultures, communities and the environment. Ironically, some scholars (Butcher, 2003; O'Reilly, 2006; Burns, Palmer and Lester, 2010) argue that the increase in tourism numbers, and subsequently the growing concentration of tourism activities by 'conscious' travellers, such as backpackers, ecotourists and voluntourists, particularly in destinations such as Australia, New Zealand, Thailand and Bali, will soon result in a fusion between the 'new' morally superior alternatives and the 'traditional' packaged holiday.

Hence, over the last decades a range of people, including Pope Benedict XVI, former United States Vice President Al Gore and numerous global and national organisations such as UNESCO, Tourism Concern and the ANVR, the Dutch Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators, have portrayed mass tourism as increasingly environmentally and culturally destructive. To rephrase Benedict XVI (quoted by Vatican Radio on 24 March 2012) "we need, therefore, to develop a different type of tourism that has the ability to promote genuine mutual understanding, without taking away from the element of rest and healthy recreation." Those who don't recognise this *particular* notion of environmental and cultural risk are considered immoral and undervaluing the consequences for one's host, and also for one's self. This illustrates the regulating, pervasive side of the moral agenda in which tourism experiences, including the gap year, and related activities are moving away from being a matter of personal choice, preference and accountability. Although relatively unexplored, I

would argue that these responses are stirred by a radicalisation of the ideas of prediction and control and recognised and maintained by the industry through which gap year experiences and interactions with the host community or other travellers are increasingly taking place according to set social codes with predefined purposes. This approach contributes to the erosion of freedom, adventure and hedonism as important and personal values of the gap year experience, and a growing (public) perception regarding 'traditional' forms of tourism as disgraceful or even disgusting. To conclude, with the points I have raised in this section I aim to challenge fundamental, but largely untested, assumptions about the gap year discourse, raising the question: to what extent are the moralising practices of the gap year industry actually yet another way of regaining control over an emerging group of intelligent and critical young consumers? In return, this raises new questions about the nature, purpose, responsibility and, ultimately, the personal choice of one's gap year experience.

METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Following Escobar's (1995) perspective, a discourse analysis (DA) was conducted to gain an insight into the industry's efforts to inform and regulate the knowledge and systems of power that contribute to the gap year discourse. Discourse analysis is a methodology that falls within the postmodern tradition (Billing, 1985; Garfinkel, 1967; Gee, 1999). Within this paper, the methodology has embraced Hammersley's (1992, 2005) 'subtle realism' stance, to steer a path through and beyond the ambivalent counter-poising of ontology caused by the realism/anti-realism debate within social constructionism. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that there is no absolute truth or comprehensive knowledge about the gap year, and this paper merely aims to represent a (part of) reality, and by no means wishes to reproduce (construct) reality. Additionally, though acknowledging that multiple, non-contradictory and valid narratives and interpretations about the phenomenon exist, impartial knowledge claims are not considered to be plausible as knowledge is collectively detained and operates within a fluctuating socio-political, historical and geographical (Dutch) framework.

In practice, applying a discourse analysis also means that this paper challenges the idea that tourism studies can produce 'scientific' and objectively measurable data concerning the gap year as an industry or individuals' 'experiences'. Therefore, instead of being passive 'windows', language and scientific and popular words about the 'gap year' have a performative purpose in 'writing' particular neo-liberal versions of 'truth' about class, capital, travel, and meanings of self and other (Watts, 2003; Antaki, 2006). Furthermore, I argue that the claim of the gap year industry to regard the gap year as a practice and performance of 'moral' values and meanings is not stable or natural in essence; instead, it is a fluid, dynamic and contemporary addition to the dominant gap year discourse. This claim can only exist because (self-referential) experts, organisations and institutions have agreed on the 'right' moral norms and assumptions and the way these meanings and understandings should be advocated to the public.

In order to understand the processes through which moral values and meanings are 'talked into being' (Willig, 2001), I have used text samples from online sources found through online search engines, based on the following words: gap year, high school, au pair, werken in het buitenland (working abroad), tussenjaar (gap year), tussenjaar in Afrika (gap year in Africa), - in Azië (Asia), - in Amerika (America), - in Latijns-Amerika (Latin-America), - in Zuid-Amerika (South-America), - in Australie (Australia), - in Europa (Europe), tussenjaar wereldwijd (gap year worldwide), tussenjaar in de natuur (gap year in nature), tussenjaar in ziekenhuizen (gap year in hospital), informatiedagen tussenjaar (information days gap year), brochures tussenjaar (brochures gap year) and social media tussenjaar (social media gap year). Sources were included in the sample if they were found on websites from gap year (or related) institutions and organisations with an office in the Netherlands.

The sources were re-examined to select the texts that focused on gap year programmes for young people, and more specifically, concentrated on the gap year as the period between secondary school and university. The texts were then read and coded, guided by the principles of what Kelle (1997) terms 'qualitative induction', in which specific phenomena are described with reference to existing categories; and 'abductive inference', in

which data presents new and atypical events (Kelle, 1997). Quotations from the websites are presented with references to the organisations, and reproduced from Dutch to English using free translations.

One of the key limitations of applying a discourse analysis is the "difficulty of 'getting to grips' with it due to the lack of prescription regarding how it should be done" (Lettinga, 2002: 540). Being fairly inexperienced in the use of discourse analysis caused issues regarding the interpretation of texts, and the risk of ending up with reductionist analyses of the text that would contribute towards the creation of another ideology (Fairclough, 1992; Edwards, 1991). Such apprehensions were mediated by considering the sorts of claims this paper is aiming to make; I do not attempt to make any judgements about the experiences and skills gained from gap year programmes. Hence, I question the 'moral' gap year discourse that I believe is being put in place by the gap year industry through the advocacy and practices of promoting, negotiating and regulating so-called 'new', or at least 'better', values and meanings of global citizenship in and through tourism to (re-)gain control over their participants.

THE GAP YEAR DISCOURSE: MORAL PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS

Within the niche of gap year tourism, it is evident that *representations* of morality are widely debated and advocated within and outside the industry. The proclaimed responsibility to offer moral experiences is a canopy that obscures and supports relationships between Western gappers and Oriental host communities, including the social constructs of coloniser/colonised, self/other and privileged/victim. Following Žižek (2006: 354), the aim of the gap year industry to represent moral concerns should not be understood as a moral *act*, but as a way of sustaining an ideological commitment on the notion that a 'cautious society' can avoid and control its own issues through regulated interventions, such as gap year activities, on behalf of its victims. For example, Stichting Commundo (www.commundo.nl, translated by the author), informs us that by doing a gap year with them:

The Commundo Foundation offers you the opportunity to contribute to a better world. By doing volunteer work you will literally enrich both the local community and yourself!

Another point, related to the idea of contributing to a 'better world' is the social construct that the person has a positive (moral) influence on the host community, or is even essential to provide specialist support. In return, the industry assures participants that their interventions will be highly appreciated by their host community and praised for trying to improve the moral standards of livelihood. This imperialist representation of the 'Western' subject as a multiculturalist is emphasised in the following example by Projects Abroad (www.projectsabroad.nl, translated by the author):

Because education in developing countries is generally less well regulated, the children highly appreciate it when you are willing to share your knowledge of the English language with them. For this type of volunteer work you don't have to have any prior teaching experience. However, it is important that you have a good level of basic English. In return for your commitment, the children will show you their enthusiasm and eagerness to learn.

Besides the emphasis on the positive impact of the individual on the host community, the previous example also illustrates that in order to participate in these programmes, often no prior knowledge or skills are needed. Instead, through placing the emphasis on the high level of support and 'learning on the job', potential participants (and their personal development) are positioned at the centre of attention. As Projects Abroad emphasises on their website (www.projectsabroad.nl, translated by the author):

You don't need to have a teacher's training prior to participating in our teaching projects. Everyone above age 16 is welcome, because you'll work on your own level… In the beginning of your stay, it is possible to work together with another teacher, so you can get used to the education methods in your chosen destination.

This acquisition of skills and knowledge as part of the quest or 'colonial' exploration is an essential element of contemporary gap year programmes and is advertised as a way of understanding different cultures and the issues facing communities through cross-cultural interaction (Raymond and Hall 2008: 531). The rise of moral forms of tourism such as ethical tourism, alternative tourism, ecotourism and responsible tourism (Butcher, 2003) has, according to Simpson (2004b: 53), led to the "awareness of the multiple social, as well as economic, impacts of tourism, and in some cases an associated sense of responsibility." Offering a range of travelling opportunities that go beyond 'mainstream' tourism (Munt, 1994), this pervasive approach advocates the moral conception of travel in the name of cultural diversity and environmental conservation. As Projects Aboard (www.gap-year.nl, translated by the author) illustrates:

Although tourists to Samoa will visit the beautiful beaches and luxury resorts, it is indeed a developing country and as a volunteer you will see a different side of the islands.

Often also addressing parents' educational aspirations for their children, young people are assured that engaging in a gap year programme is an experience which is more meaningful, fulfilling and enlightening than traditional forms of tourism. Additionally, the proposition is made that the gap year experience will also provide them with a better moral understanding of social responsibility, status amongst their peers and better prospects when

pursuing an academic career. For example, Projects Abroad (www.gap-year.nl, translated by the author) states:

> We think that a volunteer project with us will help to raise the participant's awareness. An awareness of the world around him, and an awareness of the participant's capabilities and limitations. Together, this will help him or her to make a better choice of study and/or complete the study with more commitment. In addition, you will already gain specific knowledge and help to create a better world.

This example also introduces early indicators of what is perhaps considered to be the main element in the process of moralisation; the so-called notion of (moral) disgust. As Rozin (1999) argues, disgust is a powerful tool for negative socialisation and a very effective way for the tourism 'industry' to get people to avoid something and to internalise this avoidance to make the mental constructs of objects, activities or the entire experience disgusting and disgraceful. Although the findings did not show a strong notion of (moral) disgust, there are indications of superiority and dislike expressed by gap year organisations. Quoting from the Xtreme Gap website (www.xtreme-gap.nl, translated by the author), feelings of (moral) superiority are included in attempts to distinguish those who get involved in 'new' and more unknown tourism terrains and experiences from those who engage with 'traditional' forms of tourism and behaviour:

> Young people who are a little more adventurous than the average Greece and Spain goer and young people who do not get excited about screaming from sitting on an inflatable banana behind a speedboat and spending your holiday drinking on the beach.

This approach is opposed to, and eliminating, 'traditional' tourism activities (pushing for new forms of tourist behaviour), also challenging traditional binaries of tourism as 'not work' (Urely and Reichel, 2000) and offering new mechanisms for exporting and imposing a set of moral values. Interactions with the host community or other travellers are increasingly taking place according to fixed codes with predefined purposes developed by the gap year industry in an attempt to control this 'precautionary culture' or even 'culture of caution'. As Projects Abroad (www.projects-abroad.nl, translated by the author) guarantees potential participants on their website:

> To make your stay as pleasant as possible, we have arranged a number of things, including on-site staff. Our staff is available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day just for you! They organise the accommodation with the host family; they organise and supervise your project. They know the country, the culture and customs and are also aware of the Western mentality. So we try to ensure that you have a good time and get the most out of it.

Within this text the gap year experience is embedded in a setting that resembles, or at least offers, the security of (a) home. The notion of present staff members, host families and project supervision imposes the sense of an organised (packaged?) tourism activity. On the contrary, expressions of individualism and independence are regarded as undesired side effects of the industry, economy or any other social system.

CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As a response and contributor to the growing popularity of the gap year amongst young people in Western countries, including the Netherlands, a niche gap year has emerged. This burgeoning contemporary gap year industry has not, however, emerged exclusively in response to the demands of young people (Heath, 2007). Its origins can be traced partly to Victorian 'Grand Tours' and preceding religious, military and philosophical

quests. More recently, the 'hippy trail' activities of the 1960s and 1970s can still be traced back in contemporary gap year experiences. Although critical accounts of gap year values have been around since the days of the Grand Tour, the modern-day version of the gap year is similarly disputed for its articulation, legitimation and maintenance of a set of 'truths' about the way in which global relations and dichotomies are understood and practised (Simpson, 2004b, Huxley, 2005; Snee, 2013). Notwithstanding the abundance of definitions and the growing interest of researchers (O'Shea, 2011) focusing mainly on more visible forms such as 'volunteer tourism' (Simpson, 2004a; Söderman and Snead, 2008; Palacios, 2010), 'backpacker or gap-backer tourism' (O'Reilly, 2005, 2006) or the individuals' experiences (Snee, 2013), little is still known about the process and practices of gap year 'moralisation' done by a range of public, civil society and commercial organisations. The evidence in this paper, in line with Butcher's (2003) pragmatic perspective on the moralisation of tourism, suggests that moral values and practices connected to people and places are produced and presented by the gap year industry. These moral representations reproduce and reaffirm power relations between the gap year industry and young people, preventing young people from 'deconstructing' personal preferences and 'truths' and developing awareness through reflective accounts during their gap year experience. Until recently, the contemporary gap year was celebrated as an arena of unstigmatised tourist performances, based on personal choice or preference and related to pleasure, fun, relaxation, hedonism and adventure. This is increasingly being perceived and symbolised as undesirable and immoral by the gap year industry. Instead, the niche of gap year tourism is being represented as an arena with moral status and codes, such as the need to 'engage with culture', 'respect', 'support diversity' and 'make a difference' (Butcher, 2003: 71).

Currently, there are around 15 organisations based in the Netherlands which offer (overseas) activities, ranging from paid working opportunities, leisure activities, travel packages, volunteering positions or a combination of these activities. Additionally, there are several other organisations, which additionally provide gap year programmes, packages and related services. By using discourse analysis as a methodology to explore the moral

representations and claims constructed through the gap year discourse, this paper has provided a critical, yet exploratory, insight into how the industry claims to offer a more distinctive way of reflection according to set codes of predefined purposes, and thereby contributes to regulated and narrowed views on the gap year and (mass) tourism and a distorted sense of global citizenship amongst young people. In this regard, representing moral concerns should not be understood as a moral *act*, but as a way of sustaining an ideological commitment to the notion that a precautionary society can address its own issues through regulated interventions, such as gap year activities, on behalf of its victims. Paradoxically, the gap year industry legitimises the 'colonial' immersions as 'opportunities' that go beyond 'mainstream' tourism and offer ways of understanding different cultures and communities through cross-cultural interaction and environmental conservation, resulting in an associated sense of responsibility. This paper has also introduced the notion of superiority and dislike as indicators of the key element in the process of moralisation, the so-called notion of (moral) disgust, as very effective ways for the gap year industry to get people to avoid something and to internalise this avoidance to, ultimately, make the mental constructs of objects, activities or the entire experience morally unacceptable.

Although more investigation is certainly needed beyond a Dutch context, the findings suggest that early indicators of (moral) disgust are becoming important elements in the process of disconnecting those those who get involved in 'new' and more unknown tourism terrains and experiences from those who engage with 'traditional' forms of tourism and behaviour. As part of the emerging field connected to the gap year phenomenon, this paper has contributed to the establishment of a critical research agenda that explores and questions the current gap year discourse. In future work, researchers should build on and critique the understandings in this paper, and could look in more detail, and/or with a wider geographical scope, at (particular) cultural practices of the industry and its attempts to construct and regulate a range of moral values. Needless to say, this paper is by no means inclusive and much future research is needed to actively question and deconstruct ideas about moral conceptions and forms of gap year tourism, activities and behaviour.

REFERENCES

Antaki, C. (2006) 'Producing a 'cognition'', *Discourse Studies*, 8(1), pp. 9-15.

Bagnoli, A. (2009) 'On an 'introspective journey': identities and travel in young people's lives', *European societies*, 7, pp. 301-323.

Billing, M. (1985) 'Prejudice, categorization and particularization: from perceptual to a rhetorical approach', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 15, pp. 79-103.

Bronkhorst, X. (2012) *NHTV: streepje voor met gap year* (Dutch), Nuffic Transfer, December 2012 [Online]. Available at: http://www.transfermagazine.nl/documenten/121128_ NUF_Transfer_03_web.22-23-nhtv.pdf/at_download/file (Accessed: 10 April, 2013).

Burns, P.M., Palmer, C.A. and Lester, J. (2010) *Tourism and visual culture. Vol 1: theories and concepts.* CABI, Oxfordshire, UK

Butcher, J. (2003) *The moralisation of tourism: sun, sand … and saving the world?* London: Routledge.

Butcher, V. (1993) *Taking a year off*. London: Trotman.

Craik, J. (1997) 'The culture of tourism', in Rojek, C. and Urry, J. (eds.) *Touring Cultures: Transformations of Travel and Theory*. London: Routledge pp. 113–136.

Cremin, C. (2007) 'Living and really living: the gap year and the commodification of the contingent', *Ephemera*, 7(4), pp. 526-542.

Desforges, L. (1998) 'Checking out the planet: global representation / local identities and youth travel', in Skelton, T. and Valentine, G. (eds.) *Cool places: geographies of youth culture*. London: Routledge, pp. 175-192.

Donyadide, A. (2010) 'Ethics in tourism', *European Journal of Social Sciences*, 17(3), pp. 426-433.

Edwards, D. (1991) 'Categories are for talking: on the cognitive and discursive bases of categorization', *Theory & Psychology*, 1(4), pp. 515-542.

Escobar, A. (1995) *Encountering development: the making and unmaking of the third world*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Fairclough, N. (1992) 'Discourse and text: linguistic intertextual analysis within discourse analysis', *Discourse and Society*, 3(2), pp. 193-217.

Garfinkel, H. (1967) *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity.

Gee, J.P. (1999) *An introduction to discourse analysis: theory and method*. London: Routledge.

Goodwin, H. and Francis, J. (2003) 'Ethical and responsible tourism: consumer trends in the UK', *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 9(3), pp. 271–282.

Griffith, S. (2003) *Taking a gap year*. 3rd edn. Oxford: Vacation Work.

Hammersley, M. (1992) *What's wrong with ethnography? Methodological explorations.* London: Routledge.

------ (2005) 'Should social science be critical?' Philosophy of the social sciences, 35 (2), pp. 175-195.

Heath, S. (2005) The pre-university gap year: a research agenda'. Available at: http://www.rgs.org/NR/rdonlyres/4AE09404-D3E7-4180-8DBD-8BB884DB2A08/0/SueHeath2005.pdf (Accessed: 1 May 2013).

------- (2007) 'Widening the gap: pre-university gap years and the 'economy of experience', *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 28, pp. 89-103.

Holden, A. (2003) 'In need of a new environmental ethic for tourism', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 30(1), pp. 94–108.

Huxley, L. (2005) 'Western backpackers and the global experience: an exploration of young people's interaction with local cultures', *Tourism Culture & Communication*, 5(1), pp. 37-44.

Jones, A. (2004) Review of gap year provision. London: Department of Education and Skills.

Kalisch, A. (2002) *Corporate futures: social responsibility in the tourism industry*. London: Tourism Concern.

Kelle, U. (1997) 'Theory building in qualitative research and computer programmes for the management of textual data', *Sociological Research Online*, 2(2). Available at: http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/2/2/1.html (Accessed: 1 May 2013).

King, A. (2007) *A life changing experience? A situated analysis of identity work in young people's account of their gap year*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Surrey: University of Surrey.

Lettinga, T. (2002) 'Diversity in neurological physiotherapy: a content analysis of the brunnstrom/bobath controversy', *Advances in Physiotherapy*, 4(1), pp. 23-36.

Lyons K., Hanley J., Wearing S., and Neil J. (2011) 'Gap year volunteer tourism. myths of global citizenship?', *Annals of Tourism Research,* 39(1), pp. 361-378

Macdonald, R. and Marsh, J. (2005) *Disconnected youth? Growing up in Britain's poor neighbourhoods*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Milne, T.A., Kennedy, M. and Ward, K.L. (2009) *GAP year plus: preparing professionals, professionally*. Available at: http://www.waceinc.org/papers/vancouver/Australia/ Milne,%20 Kennedy,%20 Ward.pdf (Accessed: 1 May 2013).

Molgat, M. (2007) 'Do transitions and social structures matter? How 'emerging adults' define themselves as adults', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 10, pp. 495-516.

Munt, I. (1994) 'Ecotourism or egotourism?', *Race and Class*, 36(1), pp. 49-60.

Nuffic (2012) *Gap year research* (translated from Dutch). Available at: http://www. europeesplatform.nl/sf.mcgi?4325 (Accessed: 3 January 2013).

O'Reilly, C.C. (2005) 'Tourist or traveller? Narrating backpacker identity', in Jaworski, A. and Pritchard, A. (eds.) *Discourse, Communication and Tourism*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications, pp. 150–169.

------- (2006) 'From drifter to gap year tourist: mainstreaming backpacker travel', *Annals of Tourism*, 33(4), pp. 998–1017.

Palacios, C.M. (2010) 'Volunteer tourism, development and education in a postcolonial world: conceiving global connections beyond aid', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 18(7), pp. 861-878.

Pieterman, R. and Hanekamp, J.C. (2002) *The cautious society? An essay on the rise of the precautionary culture*. Amsterdam: HAN Foundation.

Raymond, E.M. and Hall, C.M. (2008) 'The development of cross-cultural (mis)understanding through volunteer tourism', *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 16(5), pp. 530-543.

Riley, P. (1988) 'Road culture of international long-term budget travellers', *Annals of tourism research*, 15 (3), pp. 313-328.

Rozin, P. (1999) 'The process of moralization', *Psychological Science*, 10, pp. 218–221.

Simpson, K. (2003) *Droping out or signing up? The professionalis of yourth travel*. Paper presented at the Association of American geographers Annual Convention. New Orleans (5 - 8 March, 2003).

------- (2004a) 'Doing development': the gap year, volunteer-tourists and a popular practice of development', *Journal of International Development*, 16, pp. 681–692.

------- (2004b) *Broad horizons? Geographies and pedagogies of the gap year*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of Newcastle, Australia. Available at: http://www. ethicalvolunteering.org/downloads/final.PDF (Accessed: 3 January 2013).

------- (2005) Dropping Out or Signing Up? The Professionalisation of Youth Travel' *Antipode*, 37(3), pp. 447–469.

Snee, H. (2013) 'Framing the other: cosmopolitanism and the representation of difference in overseas gap year narratives', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 64, pp. 142–162.

Söderman N. and Snead S. (2008) Opening the gap: the motivation of gap year travellers to volunteer in Latin America', in Lyon, K. and Wearing, S. (eds.) *Journeys of Discovery in Volunteer Tourism*. Cambridge, MA: CABI Publishing, pp. 118–129.

Urely, N. and Reichel, A. (2000) 'Working with tourists and their attitudes to hosts', *Annals of Tourism research*, 27(2), pp. 267-283.

Vatican Radio (2012) *Pope: message to mark VII World Congress on Pastoral Care of Tourism*, News.va, 23 March 2012 [Online]. Available at: http://www.news.va/en/ news/pope-message-to-mark-vii-world-congress-on-pastora (Accessed: April 5 2013).

Watts, M. (2003) 'Development and governmentality', *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography,* 24(1), pp. 6-34.

Wearing, S. (2001) *Volunteer tourism: experiences that make a difference*. Wallingford: CABI.

Willing, C. (2001) *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: adventures in theory and method.* Buckingham: Oxford University Press.

Yates, M., and Youniss, J. (1998) 'Community service and political identity development in adolescence', *Journal of Social Issues*, 54(3), pp. 495-512.

Žižek, S. (2006) *The parallax view*. London: Verso.

Websites:

Projects Abroad: http://www.projects-abroad.nl (Accessed: 17 April 2013).

------- http:// www.gap-year.nl (Accessed: 17 April 2013).

Stichting Commundo: http://commundo.nl (Accessed: 9 May 2013).

Stichting Platform Intercultureel Leren: http://www.intercultureelleren.nl (Accessed: 15 April 2013).

Tv Blik: http://www.tvblik.nl (Accessed: 9 May 2013).

Weg Wijs: http://www.weg-wijs.net (Accessed: 17 April 2013).

Xtreme Gap Jongerenreizen: http://www.xtreme-gap.nl (Accessed: 15 April 2013).