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Transcription of Volunteer tourism and sustainable livelihoods: the case of CSU alternative breaks in Achote, Panama, 4/17/2012

Collection: Spring 2012

Title: Volunteer tourism and sustainable livelihoods: the case of CSU alternative breaks in Achote, Panama

Date: 4/17/2012

File Name: CCC\_2012\_Spring\_Eddins.mp4

Date Transcribed: November 2024

Transcription Platform: Konch AI

BEGIN TRANSCRIPTION

[00:01 - 00:06] Emily Eddins: So. Pretty cool. Yeah.

[00:07 - 00:10] Speaker 1: You're a quick a little. I know you lost the clicker [unintelligible].

[00:13 - 02:08] Emily Eddins: Okay, so like Robin [phonetic] said, I am rounding the final stages of my dissertation and I have had the opportunity to be a CCC fellow for the last year. And it's allowed me to go to Panama and do my research there in this really rural town called Achote. So, we're going to be looking at CSU Alternative Breaks as a case study of that. So, before we get into the case study, just to give you a little bit of a background about what Volunteer Tourism is. It's basically the intersection between international development aid and tourism. So, it's people going on vacation to do volunteer work. And the formal definition is, you know, that it applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups, the restoration of certain environments, or research into aspects of society or environment. So, a couple of the characteristics of sustainable development is: a really essential feature and it is really integrative of the, of the different aspects of sustainable development, because you're actually doing physical work in the town rather than, you know, tourism. Looking around and seeing the place. And the different types are, you know, research, social community development, ecological conservation and medical assistance and oh, and also, just to give you a little bit of background, these, these photos, what got me interested in

volunteer tourism was, I led volunteer conservation projects in Australia for two summers. And I really, was really interested in the communication process of what actually goes on.

[02:08 - 04:05] Emily Eddins: And, you know, being the leader, I really noticed, you know, how much communication and collaboration was necessary to actually make these, these projects work. And so it tends to happen in really different kinds of locations, really blowing up as an industry, it's really, it's all over the world. And because it is in really, mostly rural areas, there's more of a need to have, you know, a better understanding of what actually it means. And I really, I really love this quote. It's by a guy named Stefan Wearing [phonetic], was actually a good buddy and colleague of Stu's [phonetic]. But he says that, you know, "it represents the opportunity and a means of value adding in the industry". And he's talking about tourism here that seems to represent consumer capitalism that is worse. So, you know, when we think about mass tourism, you know, we, a lot of times in tourism dialogue, we talk about the S's. So, you know, suns and sex, surf, all of those things [laughs]. And yes, and, and so, you know, instead of just experiencing those things, [unintelligible] really get them back. So what it said to, it said to be kind of it's, a different sector and it's even, traditionally it was, kind of clumped into the alternative tourism, ecotourism thing. But it recently it's kind of separated itself. But it's meant to be, um, it's said to be the best practice tourism because there's a mutual and bilateral experience there, meaning that the community benefits from the projects that the students do. And the students benefit because they get the experience and they come home and they feel all warm and fuzzy, and they, they have this development and transformation of the self process. And that's really because, you know, learning is a central element and it is really social.

[04:05 - 05:57] Emily Eddins: You really get to know the people. And a lot of times, you know, you're living in, you know, really rustic accommodation with a bunch of people you don't know. And, you know, you really get to know each other and where where you are. It usually entails longer stays, but what I'm really interested in and why, a big reason why I chose Alternative Breaks, is because it's really short term. So what happens when people go into a community, do the work, and then, and then leave right away, you know. Are those connections still relevant? Do they, you know, do they still happen? What kind of transformation actually is able to take place, if it's just really short term? And like I said, more remote locations and more in-depth interaction with the host communities because you're, you're there and you're working and, and hopefully the host communities are involved in the process as well, we hope. So growing really quickly, I mean, even if, you know, if the research is an indicator, like seven women came out with the first book on ecotourism on volunteer tourism in 2001. And I at this point, I feel like I just can't even keep up with the literature. It's just coming and coming and coming. And because of that, there are many, many more critiques. And so we need to better understand what's actually going on because it directly and indirectly affects. And I

was actually, I was giving, giving the opportunity to use some of the pictures from the students this past trip. And I really liked this one because this is one of our Panamanian partners, and he's giving direction. And this, this, can you read what he, what it says on his t shirt. It says acceptance and respect and friendship.

[05:57 - 07:57] Emily Eddins: I was like, oh, it's so indicative of what we're trying to talk about here [laughs]. So, so that's all really nice. What are the critiques? What can go wrong? Well, as a lot of people have kind of said that it's, you know, kind of a form of neocolonialism, where the people come in and they do the work and, and, you know, doesn't actually benefit the daily lives and what's actually going on there and, and little local involvement. Hey, I know what you need. We're going to build this school, this school for you. And, you know, that's pretty prevalent in a lot of areas where development has, you know, has been done where there's this structure and there's a big plaque on it and it says built by, you know, these people at this time. But, you know, there wasn't any infrastructure really in place to maintain it, and it wasn't by the decisions of the community. And so it wasn't, you know, it didn't actually make the difference that they thought. And so, insufficient or incomplete project work. That's pretty prevalent as well, especially with the short term, with the short term volunteering. Especially because a lot of volunteers, what they want is to go in and start something and, and finish it and you know it, it's hard to get people to, you know, to really buy into a more continual project. So they're supposed to have this altruistic intention, but does that really actually translate into what's going on? So how do we address these critiques? What I've experienced, what came out of my master's thesis and what is, what is really coming out of the literature a lot more lately is that collaboration and better understanding among stakeholders are really, really vital to successful and sustainable projects.

[07:57 - 10:09] Emily Eddins: So I, actually, when we are in an international development class together, we learned about this sustainable livelihoods framework. And you actually just finished your master's work on sustainable livelihoods. And it's really developing into, I've seen it a lot more lately and, and graduate work in, in our department and other departments. But, so the goal is to really focus on the daily lives of what goes on in the community and as people centered and dynamic and, and bridges gaps and stuff. And, and, you know, a big reason why I'm interested in, in volunteer tourism too is because it generally has to do with the relationships between people who live in the North and people who live in the South, their developed countries and developing countries, however you want to phrase that. And it focuses on, on these five assets. One of the days, so my research assistant last summer and we were there for six weeks, and I just got back from a three week stint now and we stumbled upon a pig roast. So that's a pig head [laughs]. But, so this is the framework that I, that I based my research off of. And this was, you can't totally see it,

okay, that's fine. It was developed in '98 by this guy named Scoones, out of the UK's Department for International Development. And a lot of different people have used this framework as well, along with several others and kind of changed it to fit what, what they are studying. And so, you know, each line here is kind of a progression across and maybe these are hopefully the, the outcome. So it's both a framework and a methodology in a way to really view what your, what you're looking at.

[10:09 - 12:20] Emily Eddins: So I took that and developed it for, for volunteer tourism specifically in VT, that is volunteer tourism. So today we're going to be going through each phase. But because we are talking about Collaborative Conservation here, we're going to be really talking about the institutional processes and the partnerships involved, and how that then plays out and affects the rest of, the rest of the framework. So I chose these different themes because they are positively based. They're not, you know, they focus on the good aspects of volunteer tourism. And it's kind of hard to see, but, but, you know, multi-scale relations and mutual, that mutual is on the personal experience. And so, and then these are more of the, the capitals, and then organizational and then strategies and then outcomes. And right now I'm kind of [unintelligible] which we'll more about come July [laughs]. So the first one is just, you know, just an analysis of literature and baseline data and context. And when I went down, it was really my first opportunity to do research in the field by myself. And so when I was talking to my committee and they were like, yeah, you kind of need to take the first few weeks and, you know, really see what's, you know, what's going on there and meet the people and, and, you know, see how everybody lives. And, and this is, this is coffee. And they have all these flags all throughout the town, it's, we'll get to, like where it is and context and stuff in a second, but they're on the Caribbean coast and they've got a pretty large African cultural influence. They, you know, they really like to dance the Congo, and they really are proud of their African culture.

[12:23 - 14:52] Emily Eddins: So [clears throat] the phase two is more about the impacts of the previous volunteer projects. So, in this case, there have been ecotourism development projects. And like this is a bird-watching platform. And this is a little, it's called the Casa Museo. And it's a little museum to learn about the process of making coffee. And [unintelligible] is kind of cut off from the rest of the world. It's kind of the land that time forgot. And so there are really as much tourism as it's going on in the rest of the country. It's really hard to get to, to my town. I'm joking, not my town, their town. I'm joking [laughs]. So now we are on to what I feel is the most important, phase of, of the framework which is learning about how everything works. And this framework is, kind of what came out of my master's project. And each one of these can take different forms, meaning that, you know, the host organization can be, you know, an NGO, or it could be like a local government. It could be the local government or the volunteer tourism organizations could be a private company or non-profit

as well. So, who we have for this study is, you know, local populations. It's pretty straightforward. The host organizations are CEASPA and, which is the Panamanian Center for Research and Social Action. And they're the major Panamanian NGO that CSU has most contact with. And also, Los Rapaces, which is a local ecotourism group in the town. And in this case, the organization is CSU Alternative Breaks. And the reason why I have leaders in the middle when it comes to the communication channels is because they have the most communication with each partner throughout the year, and while they're on project and they're really, really important as far as interpretation between each partner and have a big influence on, on, uh, the understanding between, between each.

[14:53 - 17:12] Emily Eddins: So now on to where we are, so Panama here, we got Costa Rica over there and Colombia over here. And I guess I could use the little, this thing [laughs]. So we're in this box up here, Panama City is right here. So it's only an hour and a half away from Panama City. But what happens right here, right around Cologne is easier to see on the next slide, is they've got [unintelligible], which in Panama City, there's a big bridge over the canal, so you can get across unobstructed, no problem. Well, right here you have, it's a drawbridge, so you have to wait for the ships to cross, which means you could wait 15 minutes, 45 minutes, hour and a half. So most people just don't go. And then you drive down here through the national park and then finally into [unintelligible]. What's interesting about this is that [unintelligible] is not the buffer community to San Lorenzo. So if you want to go to the national park, you don't even have to pass through. Also, San Lorenzo has the world record for the number of bird species sighted in a day. And so it's really, really rich and birders just love it. But because of the locks, you can't get there, you know, when you really, really want to at 4:30 in the morning or whatever. And also they have a World Heritage site which is [unintelligible]. And it was one of the most important Spanish forts in the entire Spanish colonial era. So, Spanish figured out pretty early on that this was the most narrow part of the entire Americas. And so it was instead of tracking all of the gold and the indigo dye and slaves and stuff all the way around South America, they created a road called Camino de las Cruces, and they called it that because a lot of people died on it.

[17:12 - 19:37] Emily Eddins: But, but then they took all this stuff through here and then out from, from the [unintelligible], I'm not used to this, Portobello and then San Lorenzo which is here. And when I teach Stu's class, a great way to get their attention is to say, so, you guys ever heard of Captain Morgan? Like the rum? [laughs] Well, he was a real dude, and he, you know, ransacked these, these forts a couple of times. So, oh, I forgot to say that San Lorenzo was also previously US military jungle training camp. And so this whole area, while it's called Deferred Use, it really means unexplored ordinance. So there's no way that we can have trails in this area, even though, if this trail

here on this side. And it was only instated as a, as a national park in '99. And so, yeah, it's brand new. And actually the, the mediator for the processes is our own Jim [unconfirmed name] [phonetic] in setting up the national park over there. So canals had a huge influence, lots and lots of birds. And now, Achote's mostly an agricultural society, and most of you guys know George Wallace, right? Yes, you love the man [laughs]. But the, the connection to the land that I saw in the people in Achote is really the only other time I've ever seen it in my life is, is through George Wallace and his connection to the land. So that's kind of the parallel, that I see. And this is a picture of the old Spanish ruins at Fort San Lorenzo. So, host community, just, I'm going to be giving just real small snapshots of, of their perspectives that I think highlight, um, what they mean or who and who they are because right now I'm, I'm in the analysis phase.

[19:37 - 21:29] Emily Eddins: And so I don't really have, you know, everything to report. But, so for those of you who speak Spanish, what is una semilla? A seed. Yeah. So the children are like a seed and like seeds, they go and they learn to conserve the environment and the, and the birds and to protect the environment. And then they come home and explain to their parents that to not, you know, throw trash on the ground. And, and they are growing mentally. I just thought that was a great metaphor to use. And so the host organization, the Panamanian Center for Research and Social Action, I gave a presentation, something pretty similar to this a couple of weeks ago in Spanish. So, I forgot to tell you, [unintelligible] I switch over to Spanish and I'm sorry. But they are one of the biggest social, socially based NGOs in all of Panama. They have projects all over the country and, and in the region where I'm working, they help set up the national park. They set up a coffee cooperative and, and the ecotourism development group with aid from, it was from the World Bank and USAID. [laughs] And, you know, a funny story from them is they were in the process of, of building this proposal for the World Bank, and, you know, they were sending it back and forth. And, and they were also working really closely with the Panamanian government. And the World Bank at the time was like, oh, we, you know, we really want, you know, this community involvement piece to be built in to the proposal.

[21:29 - 23:46] Emily Eddins: And and, so they were talking with CEASPA and CEASPA was like, you can't do that, the government won't like it. You know, they'll reject it, we won't be able to go on with the project, you know. And, and apparently the World Bank said these documents in Spanish, no, in English, you can translate it into Spanish however you like. And, but, wow, but the, the community involvement piece did eventually hatch. And so that's how these, these groups in the area came, came to be. So the, the ecotourism group, their vision is to alleviate poverty and bringing tourists in to learn about the natural resources. The President of the group was able to go on a training set up actually by CPAN ten years ago. And this is, actually this whole ecotourism

development in the area is kind of a seed of what they planted a long time ago. And they say here that, you know, our vision is to promote ecotourism in Achote because nowadays there is confidence in Achote. And, you know, ten years ago, roughly ten, 12 years ago was when the first Lonely Planet came out about this region, about Panama. And about this region, it said, don't go, don't bother, no services, nowhere to stay, just don't even go. And, um, and since then they've, they've been trying to promote it, but it's still, still in the very basic stages, mostly because of the canal. So the organization is CSU Alternative Breaks. They've been sending students down to Achote for, I think this was the eighth year and they've done a different project every year. And this is the community center where, where everybody stays when they come in to town and these flags and stuff are all set up by, CSU students.

[23:46 - 25:43] Emily Eddins: And so these are some of the projects that, that they built. little trail to talk about the process of making coffee, which is really important to the livelihoods in the area, as well as this museum that I talked about and a few bird-watching platforms. And this year they built a, it's called the Casa de Ospedale [phonetic], and it's somewhere to stay other than the community center. Because something that came out of one of my most previous trips is that I had the opportunity to meet with some of the top ecotourism guides in the entire area, or in all of Panama. Like I, I had an interview with the guy who takes around the people who write the Lonely Planet. And, and so I got his, you know, their perspectives and, and what they were saying is, you know, there's really like the clients that we have don't want to stay in the community center. It's great for school groups, but, uh, but really, there's nowhere to stay. So they built this, and this is a quote from one of the leaders. And I put it up here because it's really characteristic of what they, what the volunteers are looking for and what they like and what they want to get out of their experience. So you can take, you know, it's the deep emotional connections that we have the opportunity to make with the locals of Achote, and being able to feel that Achote is our home, and the people are our family. And I think they really, you know, feel that when they're there. I mean, you know, there's all sorts of critiques that go into that because they're only, they come ten days in March and that's it. So they come and they do a project, and then they leave for the whole year, and then they come back and do another project.

[25:45 - 26:33] Emily Eddins: So that was more, you know, mostly about the the collaboration. And the leaders really, they are, [clears throat] they're students, they're university students. And that's actually pretty characteristic of, of volunteer tourism in general. They tend to be either just graduated from university or, or any university at the time. And they are the ones that have the contact with all of, with everybody else throughout the year. They have a couple of faculty leaders, but the faculty

leaders told me that their role is pretty much to make sure that students don't die [laughs]. And they really, you know, they really want it to be a student-led organization.

[26:35 - 26:35] Speaker 2: Yeah.

[26:35 - 27:00] Emily Eddins: So, the the next phase is kind of where you know, where I'm going and it gets a little, gets a little fuzzier at this point of how to, how to implement and, and, you know. Because there isn't too much ecotourism in the area, the people of the town don't really see any, many of the benefits from it or see it really much at all. And, and so, you know, when I was talking to the organization, to CEASPA a couple of weeks ago, I was like, well, you know, the students don't have to do ecotourism development projects. They could do, you know, other things for different people in the community, and then those people could see, you know, the benefits from volunteers and then, you know, and then kind of have this more inclusive picture. Because right now, you know, a lot of the, a lot of the people who live in the town are like, okay, yeah, you know, we see them come in March and that's pretty much it. Like, I don't really, you know, have an opinion and I don't really, you know, know really much about what they do or what they're working for and stuff.

[27:00 - 30:21] Emily Eddins: And so although the, the projects actually are the, the decision making for the projects are actually made by most [unintelligible] and people who live in Achiote, they do not, you know, a comprehensive decision from the whole town, which is hard to do anyway. But, but they are made by the people there rather than people here, so that's good. So the last phase is the synthesis. It's taking everything that we've learned and putting, putting it all together, and sharing results, and getting feedback. The conversation that I had after my presentation at CEASPA was, was really pretty phenomenal. It was really because they've been working in that area, you know, for the last 12 years. And, and as we all know of a major hiccup in development projects in general is the maintenance and the follow up and what actually goes on. And so they're, they're pretty excited. I think that, that I'm going down and, and doing this research now. And actually I've got plans for the future. There's, there are a couple of other, there's a sociologist and an economist which, by the way, the three of us together form the three colors of sustainability [laughs]. We, we have planed there, the previous faculty and student leaders on, on these trips as well. And so we're talking about a longitudinal study about the area and development because, I believe that I forgot to mention that they're building a bridge. Did I forget to mention that they're building a bridge? I did. They're building a bridge across the canal that's set to be completed in 2014. And so unobstructed traffic is going to change that area enormously very quickly. And unfortunately, Cologne, which is the closest city across the canal, is the most dangerous city in the country by far.

[30:21 - 32:29] Emily Eddins: And so even though these, you know, the social systems are, are in, you know, in place, they've got the coffee cooperative, they've got, you know, these community groups, how strong are they and what, you know, I feel like we talk about, resilience a lot in terms of, like national, natural disasters. But this is, this could be about as catastrophic as a national, as a natural disaster to the area, socially I think. If, you know, things aren't in place and aren't developed the right way. Which they are developing in the right way anyway, that's what we're all talking about, right? [laughs] But so yeah, so just things for the future and continuing, you know, the collaborative process and, and sharing and learning and stuff. And, oh, I totally forgot to change this from sorry, from Spanish. Well, okay, so we've got the just, you know, things to think about or talk about. You know, there are, they're really positive aspects, but, you know, the involvement of the community and the decision making of the process [unintelligible] backwards. This is making of the projects already done by people in the community. And they are pretty strong, the partnership is really strong. I mean, there is actually, it's actually, actually a good example, I think, of collaboration and volunteer tourism. And, which I wasn't, I don't, I didn't try to go in with an open mind, but you know, with all of the critiques and everything that's coming out, I was definitely skeptical. But it is actually pretty strong. And, and because they, they do have a little bit of infrastructure for ecotourism and, and experience with the volunteers, you know, if there's more tourism in the area, you know, they, they it's not like they've never seen a tourist before.

[32:31 - 34:34] Emily Eddins: So, I called this things to think about because I thought the local government representative was going to be coming to my presentation. I didn't want to say bad things about your town [laughs]. So they don't have internet, there's no internet presence about the town. There's no way to find out about it. The ecotourism infrastructure is really, really, really shy. They're not shy, it's just really rustic and not really developed. And it doesn't bring in much money because it's bird-watching platforms and a little museum. And so the economic impacts aren't really as realized as they could be with other, other types of projects. And so birding tourism is, you know, right now the most prevalent form of tourism, but, you know, we were kind of talking about different types of ecotourism as well. So putting together sustainable livelihoods and volunteer tourism is really, it just makes a lot of sense to me. I don't know why anybody would really implement voluntary tourism without considering the daily lives and the internet systems that are in place in the town, but I think that it's, you know, hopefully people will be able to, you know, kind of recognize the, this kind of framework or, you know, or the importance of what goes on in the local communities. And I was actually, I got an email last week from a guy that was like, he's a, you know, he's like, I'm a PhD student at Auburn University, and I study volunteer tourism. And I saw your research on [voluntourism.org](http://voluntourism.org), which is kind, it's a research website.

[34:34 - 36:47] Emily Eddins: And you can, you know, go there for all different kinds of organizations, if you're a volunteer tourism organization, it's just a kind of a sharing space. And I was like, really? Volunteer, volunteer tourism [unintelligible] is real? [unintelligible] I'm on that. I was like, I've been getting their newsletter for years, and I've been checking out their website for, you know, for research and stuff forever. But, and so I checked it out and, and on the research post from last month, the title of it was New Directions for Volunteer Tourism Research Communities First. And the guy who writes the research post found my CCC research statement and, and quoted it. And he said, you know, for those of you who are looking for more from the communities perspectives, and more about the actual communities, most of the right now in the literature. Most of the research that's been done on volunteer tourism is from the volunteers' perspective. You know, it's, it's very easy to get to. They're usually, you know, around where the, you know, the researchers live there. They usually speak the same language and stuff. And so it's all been mostly about the attitudes and motivations and all of that from the volunteers perspective. And so one of the critiques is that it really hasn't been very much done on the host community's perspective. And so, I was like, oh, really? Your research is pretty cool. So I really, I thought that was cool. And, so hopefully people will be talking more about the collaborative processes in volunteer tourism and, and development in general. I mean, it's, it's what? The eighth Millennium Development Goal, developing global partnerships. But it's also something that's, you know, as we know, is really hard to measure. And it's really hard to, you know, see actually what people are doing and talking about. But I've been honored to be a part of this organization and to do research that I think is really exciting and shows a good example of collaboration in this budding field of development work, I guess. So, that's where I'm at.

[36:47 - 36:52] Speaker 2: Okay, [applause]. So, if you've got sometime [unintelligible].

[36:53 - 36:53] Speaker 3: [unintelligible] some pictures.

[36:56 - 36:57] Emily Eddins: Yeah, sure. Yeah.

[37:00 - 37:13] Speaker 4: So you're going to be driven from [unintelligible] the community. What were the priorities set by the community and how [unintelligible] with projects [unintelligible]?

[37:16 - 37:43] Emily Eddins: Right. So they were, there's a series of meetings every year around October held by the ecotourism group. And they, they sit around and talk about different ideas and projects. And people from CEASPA come in and sit down, sit down on those meetings as well. And then CEASPA relays that information back to CSU.

[37:43 - 37:46] Speaker 4: Do they have like a community planning board separate from that?

[37:48 - 38:48] Emily Eddins: No. And you know, the, the government representative, I've been working, you know, I worked with him all last summer and all through my, my last three weeks in March and, you know, and he's super excited. And he, he's doing all of these projects in town, like, he's building a bunch of community centers and, you know, all in different towns around the area. But he never really like put together the, the connection between what the volunteers were doing and, and what, you know, working toward the same goal. Like, let's see if we can, you know, get something together with that. And so I think that there are opportunities there, but that it's really, there isn't a community development board or a community meeting center or any sort of infrastructure like that in place.

[38:49 - 38:49] Speaker 2: Other than [unintelligible].

[38:49 - 38:51] Emily Eddins: Yeah. Yeah.

[38:52 - 39:04] Speaker 4: So given that this is a, in your research, did you come across examples that are [unintelligible] account, or community structure that is particularly well suited for this kind of tourism [unintelligible] development?

[39:12 - 40:29] Emily Eddins: You know, I. I don't think that there's been like an, a study done on, like, this is the best kind of town for, for that, but it tends to happen more in really rural areas. And so that's just where it's happened. I, I do think that Achiote is actually pretty well set up for that. I mean, they've got the community center, they've got the experience. I would really love when I'm a professor to have my own groups to take down there as well. And I think that it has a lot of potential to actually, you know, make more of a difference to have that, you know, more community involvement piece as well. But but yeah, it's really, it's so fragmented and it's all over. I mean, I, when I was working in Australia, I was everywhere from, you know, a national park outside of Sydney to working with the Aboriginal Land Management Group in the Northern Territory, and, you know, I mean, it's, it's everywhere. But I don't think there is a like, profile of a community that's like, this is the best kind, this is the best way. Yeah.

[40:30 - 40:42] Speaker 5: So going back to the framework where we have the leaders centered framework. I'm curious about why leaders were at the center close to the...

[40:45 - 40:46] Emily Eddins: The community.

[40:47 - 40:47] Speaker 5: The community.

[40:47 - 41:24] Emily Eddins: Yeah. Yeah. So the reason, well, so the reason why I have the leaders in the middle is because, like that part is more to illustrate the communication channels. Yeah. Which I guess I could have put up there, but yeah. So the reason why I have the leaders in the middle is because they do have the most communication with each. And because a lot of the communities are really rural, a lot of them don't have internet, and a lot of, you know, that, there's usually a language barrier. [unintelligible] the, the leaders tend to have the most communication with each other.

[41:31 - 42:04] Harold: First of all, my name is Harold [phonetic]. [unintelligible] [laughs] this talk more definitely. But, so I'm interested in, okay, forgive me if I missed this, but, the sustainable framework when we were down there recently or before. Have you ever presented this as a framework to kind of stakeholders involved here? And so I'm wondering how much like, how that's working for you [unintelligible] this model is way?

[42:05 - 42:05] Emily Eddins: Yeah.

[42:05 - 42:06] Harold: [unintelligible] to kind of organizing the discussion [unintelligible].

[42:07 - 43:14] Emily Eddins: You know, I think that, I think the most well, I think the most would come out of it is more, is the community involvement pieces having people, maybe having to volunteer to do projects other than ecotourism development. You know, and to really, you know, integrate the more prevalent livelihoods of the people who live there, like the coffee farms or the, you know, the cows. and [unintelligible] and stuff like that. But, but at the same time, because, you know, the bridge is coming and there' going to be much more tourism in the future. Like it's, it's an interesting process, and then it's like, okay, well do you, you know, you developed like ecotourism, in making ecotourism rather than, you know, people coming in and, and, you know, big buildings, big, you know, masters and the sky rises on the beach, you know, 15 minutes away or, you know, how do you, you know [unintelligible].

[43:16 - 43:23] Harold: So the question, I mean, how do you grow something where it's economically viable and build the community without [unintelligible]?

[43:26 - 43:26] Emily Eddins: Right.

[43:26 - 43:27] Harold: And [unintelligible]and cool off.

[43:28 - 45:55] Emily Eddins: Yeah, exactly. And that's, that is a major conundrum in ecotourism development and tourism development everywhere, really is. Where is that threshold for, your carrying capacity I guess, of tourists. And, and luckily actually, Panama has one of the, the poster child for sustainable tourism as its neighbor. And so they've actually, as a country, learned a lot about what, what to do and what not to do, you know, as far as sustainable tourism development in Panama. And actually this year, Panama was, was named the number one place to be, the number one tourist destination in the world by The New York Times and [unintelligible]. And so it's just, it's so young and the government is so business oriented because of the canal. And, you know, and they really want to see numbers. And so it's either, you know, they've got the mass tourism and the mass tourism is coming. But you know, but they've also got these examples from Costa Rica, and they really want to, you know, do something there. But they're also really, you know, involved in these multi-billion dollar, you know, subway system, and widening the canal, and building the bridge, and all of these things. And development, development infrastructure wise, and for the people who already have money. Actually, hold on, yesterday, yesterday on NPR, there was a study, or a segment about tourism in Panama. And the title of it was, Panama booms while the poor watch from afar. And, yeah, I didn't realize either. Now, after all of my research there for the last year almost, that it has the highest economic growth rate in the hemisphere. Yeah. And it's just like they say, you know, that we still have two countries. The first world country that's going gangbusters in an hour and a half away. A fourth world country in the vicinity of [unintelligible]. And, you know, that's a characteristic of a lot of places that are experiencing, you know, some major development projects. But it's such a small country that, you know, you just go right there and [unintelligible].

[46:04 - 49:24] Speaker 6: You made a comment about, like, a [unintelligible] of resources [unintelligible] your exact words. I'm wondering, in this case, it's about [unintelligible] instead of the possibility of also [unintelligible] the resources in a way of [unintelligible] idea of tourism. Because, I would think that, I was thinking that if I was from a community such as this, and I didn't know what this students were coming to do [unintelligible] was communicating the same thing. Where is not, where is it being communicated? So, I'm assuming then that some guy from the government that works in this field that is, you know, coming forth with these ideas. I'm just guessing, you know, because I'm thinking if it were me doing it, a community that has been fairly secluded from the outside, I may want to, like, keep my community that way, you know. But I'm also thinking how people, well let me back up. If it happens in such a way where there's an outside entity with [unintelligible] government level or wherever, and they make these decisions on behalf of myself, in the environment that I live in, you know. I, [unintelligible] because there was no consultation from that person, and said, oh, you know, this is my idea, that to go for [unintelligible]. We'd like to build these bird watching things. And what, what is my take on that? Because, like, if I lived in the

community and [unintelligible], and they built these things, and I still haven't [unintelligible] with you. I would think of it like that. Down the road especially, they build this bridge. Are people going to be taken as resources because they want to watch birds. Or like, and the other thing, I'm just wondering, because, like, where I come from, you are familiar with Phoenix. In Arizona is growing [unintelligible], I don't know, but by the thousands. So you use this tool and you know the area, it's a desert. Where does it get water? Where does it get its resources to sustain that community, you know? It's like they're living in some kind of bubble down there. How are they getting their water? How are they getting the things that they need? What's happening, you know, you get all these people who are attracted to the city [unintelligible] in the sunshine. Or go there as a tourist and think it's really [unintelligible]. But really, how people experience lives is because there's the indigenous people [unintelligible] that are given all the resources to them for [unintelligible]. So that's why I'm saying that [unintelligible] taking your resources.

[49:25 - 49:25] Emily Eddins: Yeah.

[49:25 - 49:27] Speaker 6: Makes the decisions and [unintelligible].

[49:31 - 50:47] Emily Eddins: Well, right now. I, because it's so poor, they, you know. It's because they haven't really experienced much. Well, actually. Okay. So there's been a ton of change over the last, you know, 25 years. There didn't use to be a road, and now there's a road, and now there's, you know, buses and, and trucks and stuff coming up, coming up the [unintelligible] [coughs]. And luckily, because there in Panama, all of their infrastructure for water and for those kinds of resources was kind of [unintelligible]. They, it's all there. But I at this point, towards like taking natural resources isn't as much of a threat. It's definitely a potential in the future, but I think the most, the biggest threat immediately with tourists coming in is more of the impact on the cultural resources of the [unintelligible], and how they live their lives. And because they, you know, and are partners with, for a long time and...

[50:47 - 50:48] Speaker 6: [unintelligible] resources in Panama? the government is the one that makes these decisions.

[50:53 - 50:53] Emily Eddins: Right.

[50:57 - 51:06] Speaker 6: You know the way it is, it's taking resources from them to create what? tourism, to create an economy, whatever.

[51:06 - 53:24] Emily Eddins: Yeah. Yeah. I, you know, the government and, economy government is very highly criticized these days for being very progressive as far as infrastructure. I mean, they're just building, and building, and building, and building with very little regard to the people that live there. And, and I don't, I mean, hey're actually within the last two months, in a different region of Canada, they're trying to build a hydroelectric dams in an indigenous area. And, and there were riots, and a couple of people were killed and, and, and now that we live in the age of cell phones, everybody's, you know, taking pictures of all of this. [unintelligible] for this. They, [unintelligible] to be devoted [unintelligible]. And so after these riots, you know, the pictures, surfaced on the internet of the government attacking the indigenous people. They told the cell phone companies to shutdown, to shut down communication in the area. And, you know, and of course, the government was like, well, no, I'm [unintelligible], you know. They, they, they took down the cell phone towers while the cell phone companies did not want to [unintelligible] in the national newspapers and editorials and, you know, the government [unintelligible]. So yeah, it's, it's pretty. And I mean, you know, as far as indigenous populations are in, in Panama, like they were actually able ,to in the first place when they were when they got their independence from Colombia, the indigenous people were allowed to draw their own lines around their own, you know, areas. And so it's kind of been championed as it's a model, you know, like, okay, we're letting you stay on your own, you know, on your own land. But now that there's tons of copper and, you know, these little hydroelectric opportunities [unintelligible], which I don't mind, you know. And so that's kind of a characteristic of their standpoint in their regard for [unintelligible] way of development. Yeah.

[53:29 - 53:57] Speaker 7: I think my big question would be to [unintelligible] and with that central, their central location in the communication chain? [unintelligible] area of all of those communications. What that person [unintelligible] on, great communication as it goes from point A to point B, and then how that could potentially [unintelligible].

[54:00 - 55:23] Emily Eddins: Yeah. So right now, and I think that this is fairly a characteristic of other volunteer tourism organizations. That the leaders are kind of transitory people. And, you know, when I was one as well, I had just graduated college at [unintelligible] travel in the world, you know. And I think, you know, training evolved as well. It's super important. And in this case, Panama is the only alternative spring rate at CSU that's out of the country. The only other alternative was [unintelligible] at Brexit. And as far as I understand, the leaders of this group are trained the exact same way as [unintelligible] that are going to come in Ireland and, you know, in California, or Utah, or to New Orleans, or whatever. And I think that there needs be a bit more facilities to specific training. And, but I think, yeah, they're usually pretty young, you know, high spirited individual that want to go out

into the world, but also, you know. I don't know [unintelligible]. Yeah. What's what's there, what's there [unintelligible] exactly? Yeah. So, that's sort of turned [unintelligible].

[55:23 - 55:25] Speaker 7: A little knowledge in a lot of [unintelligible]. [audience murmuring]

[55:26 - 55:42] Emily Eddins: Yeah, exactly. [unintelligible]. I mean, even in my experience, I had three days worth of training. It was pretty intense. But then they take you off into the field, and, you know, I didn't even have a cell phone for, you know, for months on end. And so, yeah.

[55:43 - 55:56] Speaker 7: When [unintelligible]. We saw that in some, some committee and so forth [unintelligible]

[55:56 - 56:12] Emily Eddins: Well. I think that varies from case to case. But in this, in, in all of the all of my experience and all of, but in this case as well, there is somebody in the community that, that kind of takes care of a leader as well [unintelligible].

[56:12 - 56:44] Speaker 8: Well, thank you. I just want to make sure, what you know, so, so the CSU [unintelligible] is sort of central. [unintelligible] in. And, but was that the sea for the other tourism projects in the community or do they preexisting or [unintelligible] how it started.

[56:44 - 56:48] Emily Eddins: Yeah, so it came from an initiative set forth by CEASPA.

[56:48 - 56:48] Speaker 8: Okay. They're NGO?

[56:48 - 57:29] Emily Eddins: They are NGO who actually had lot of primary contact with the citizens here, who actually set up the first trip. So, Ryan Benjamin [phonetic] is the first group of [unintelligible] and then after it's handed on to [unintelligible] breaks. And, and the ecotourism idea was part of that World Bank initiative. Back when the park was being set up and community involvement [unintelligible]. And, and part of that was ecotourism development training of the people in the town by, in, in Costa Rica. So they fall into [unintelligible] their ideas there.

[57:32 - 57:46] Speaker 8: [clears throat] Okay, so just real quick, I guess the point is, what do you think is the potential for, sort of transferring all of this at some point down the road, maybe the community like, community control, the community ownership [unintelligible]?

[57:46 - 57:50] Emily Eddins: Yeah. Well, the group, the group is people who live in the community.

[57:50 - 57:50] Speaker 8: Right.

[57:51 - 58:33] Emily Eddins: It's just not everybody. And, you know, because, you know, CEASPA, you know, and the World Bank had this community involvement piece. The group started out with, you know, 25 people, now it's five. [unintelligible] people, you know, and they weren't realizing the benefits. They you know, it interfered with the, you know, ability to, you know, carry on their daily lives like they normally would in [unintelligible]. So that is why it pared down. I, I hope that, this longitudinal study that, you know, talking about doing with these, people here as well, will be more to that. [unintelligible] especially where changes are coming in. People start seeing how you know [unintelligible].

[58:43 - 58:44] Speaker 2: Thank you [applause].

[58:53 - 58:53] Speaker 9: Sweet.

END TRANSCRIPTION