An Alternative Model for Development?

Promise and politics in the projecthonduras network

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Abstract

Projecthonduras is an online network of mostly voluntary organisations working in development in Honduras. It aims to be practical, positive and apolitical, and to create an 'alternative model' for development based on mobilising people using information and communication technology (ICT). In the context of on-going debates regarding the problems with conventional development aid and the search for new approaches, the projecthonduras rhetoric appears to hold much promise. Indeed its early inception and more than a decade of operation make it stand out in a world of failed Internet start-ups, and its positive and constructive approach finds resonance with recent, more hopeful post-development literature.

However after three years of research this thesis outlines a much more complex picture of projecthonduras. This is one with very quiet online forums but a growing political voice, particularly following the 2009 coup d'état in Honduras. The thesis addresses this apparent paradox, unpacking the structure and discourse of projecthonduras, and identifying the underlying assumptions and understandings that underpin both the 'alternative' development rhetoric and the political activity.

Researched and written as an ethnography, this thesis positions projecthonduras within the development studies literature and within the particular context of contemporary Honduras. Using on and offline interviews and participant observation, and making extensive use of Internet-based data, this study shows that the projecthonduras development model is based on a paternalistic and modernising model of development, one that is connected to a liberal, capitalist politics.

The emergence of political themes in this research is reflective of the messy realities of development intervention, and of geo-political, economic and cultural power and privilege within Honduras. However as indicated by the title of this thesis, the concept of politics stands alongside that of promise, the potential held by the idea of ICT and social networking. This intersection of promise and politics highlights the contours of the structural and discursive boundaries in which projecthonduras operates, and emphasises the complexity inherent in the search for development alternatives.

Dedication

In loving memory of

Evelyn May Smithers

And

Leonard James McLennan

Grandparents who passed on during the course of my candidature.

You may not see this final product but I hope I made you proud.

Acknowledgements

Thank you for your love, prayers and encouragement (and also for babysitting services, cash loans, advice and for leaving your comfort zone to visit us in Honduras!). I love you.

Finally, most importantly, Luis and Maya. There is no way to thank you enough for all that you have done for me, and endured with me, over the past four years. Luis, your love, attention and un-ending belief in me has sustained me throughout this process. Your insights into Honduran culture and your unique perspective on the research has been enormously helpful, as has been your willingness to take on far more than your fair share of housekeeping and childcare responsibilities. I am profoundly grateful. Muchísimas gracias mi amor, eres una persona increíble y muy especial. Te amo.

Maya, thank you for your hugs, kisses and I love yous… I love you so much too. Thank you for being patient while I finished this 'book'. Thank you for inviting me to play games with you and keeping me entertained. Your laughter is the most precious sound in the world and I look forward to hearing far more of it in the future.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AECI   Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional (Agency for International Cooperation – Spain)

AFL-CIO   The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

AI   Appreciative Inquiry

AoIR   Association of Internet Researchers

ASONOG   Asociación de Organismos No Gubernamentales de Honduras (Association of Honduran Non-Governmental Organisations)

CA   Central America

CA-4   Central America-4 Border Control Agreement

CABEI   Central American Bank for Economic Integration

CAFTA   Central American Free Trade Agreement

CARE   Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere

CIDA   Canadian International Development Agency

CODEH   Comisionado de Derechos Humanos de Honduras (Honduran Human Rights Commission)

CRS   Catholic Relief Services

ECLA   Economic Commission for Latin America

EU   European Union

FOPRIDEH   Foro de Organizaciones Privadas de Desarollo de Honduras (Forum of Private Development Organisations of Honduras)

GTZ   Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammerabeit (Society for Technical Cooperation – Germany)

HIPC   Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative

ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ICT4D	Information and Communication Technology for Development
IDB	Inter-American Development Bank
INE	Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas (Honduran National Institute of Statistics)
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
JICA	Japanese International Cooperation Agency
JTF-B	Joint Task Force Bravo, SOUTHCOM
MEDEL	Medical Element of JTF-B
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OAS	Organisation of American States
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PAHO	Pan American Health Organisation
PO	Participant Observation
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SHH	Students Helping Honduras
SMF	Special Missions Foundation
SOUTHCOM	US Southern Command (of the US Defence Force)
UFCO	United Fruit Company
UN	United Nations
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
Web2forDev	Web 2.0 for Development

Chapter 1. Introduction: Generative Intersections

> *projecthonduras.com is an online portal for information on ways to help*
> *Honduras. We are also a network of individuals and groups working on*
> *innovative, grassroots responses to the country's social and economic needs,*
> *leveraging the information and the talent, expertise, and time within our network*
> *to serve as a catalyst for change... The vision of projecthonduras.com is to create*
> *an alternative model of development for poor countries based on mobilizing and*
> *channelling our "human capital" rather than endlessly emphasizing the need for*
> *more money*
>
> *. (projecthonduras.com, 2007)*

Projecthonduras is a development-oriented network, centred on the website www.projecthonduras.com, which was founded in 1998 to link Hondurans in the USA who had business and professional skills with needs at home in Honduras. Over the past ten years the network has broadened and now aims more generally to network individuals and organisations working in development in Honduras by facilitating the sharing of information and resources, and by connecting people with each other using information and communication technology (ICT), and an annual (face-to-face) conference in Copán Ruinas, Honduras.

On the surface projecthonduras[1] appears to be a success, its early inception and more than a decade of operation making it stand out in a rapidly changing online environment. However as the quote above indicates, the network claims to be more than just an online network of people in development, it is about being practical, positive and creative, and about forming an 'alternative model' for development based on 'human capital'[2] rather than financial aid. In the context of on-going debates regarding the problems with

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[1] Early in our correspondence Marco requested that I refer to projecthonduras as projecthonduras.com, as this is the full name of the network and reflects its primarily online identity. I have done this in almost all correspondence, interviews and conversations I have had over the duration of this research, however in the course of writing I have reverted to using projecthonduras, except where I am deliberately referring to the website. This reflects the common usage of the term within the network, it makes it clear to the reader whether I am talking of the website or of the network in general; and it recognises the idea that the projecthonduras network is far wider than just a website (something which will be discussed later in this thesis).

[2] The term 'human capital', and the way in which it is used in the projecthonduras network, will be defined later in this Chapter, and in more detail in Chapter 2.

conventional development aid and the search for new approaches, this is a bold claim. This thesis takes an ethnographic approach to exploring this claim, the promise of projecthonduras' vision for an alternative model for development, and how this plays out in the shadows of the political and development context that is contemporary Honduras. To begin this discussion, this chapter will describe how I chose the research topic, and will outline the research questions and the theoretical position of the study.

Beginnings

The research for this thesis began with a moment of inspiration, as I browsed the projecthonduras.com website sometime in August 2007. I was looking for a research topic that was hopeful, and for development ideas that offered solutions rather than just critique, and the projecthonduras rhetoric seemed very promising. I wondered if this really could be an alternative model for development. What might it have to offer the development community? Accordingly, I sent an email to Marco Cáceres, founder of projecthonduras. In the email I introduced myself as a recent graduate with a Master's degree in Development Studies, and indicated that I was planning to do a PhD thesis and I was looking for a topic. I asked if it might be possible to work with projecthonduras. In less than an hour I had a reply from Marco[3] by email, requesting we chat online using some new audio conferencing software he wanted to try. I agreed, and followed his instructions to log on to the conferencing website. In that first conversation we talked for about 45 minutes. Marco was not only agreeable to a study of projecthonduras.com, he was very enthusiastic. He told me he had wanted to record what was happening with projecthonduras for a while but did not have the time to do it himself, and told me he would send some information to get me started.

Within two hours of sending that spontaneous email I had a research topic, but although the topic decision came quickly, it did not come from nowhere. I had been a member of the projecthonduras.com Yahoo forums since my marriage to a Honduran in 2001, and had

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[3] As the founder of projecthonduras Marco Cáceres is the most visible member of the network and his name appears throughout this thesis. In common with the network in general, I have chosen to refer to him simply as "Marco" throughout this thesis, although on a few occasions (notably in relation to formal publications which are cited in the bibliography) he is referenced by his full, formal, name Marco Cáceres Di Iorio.

utilised the network when arranging my Master's fieldwork. Indeed my Master's topic[4], the role of short term medical teams in healthcare in Honduras, had its roots in a discussion on the projecthonduras 'Honduras Healthcare' email list. My initial email to Marco was therefore also something of a pragmatic decision, based both on an interest in the projecthonduras model and in online networking for development, and on the knowledge that through the projecthonduras network I would have access to a wide variety of organisations and hundreds of individuals working in development in Honduras.

While the choice of topic and early stages of the research were characterised by promise, skipping forward three years, through literature reviews, data collection, data analysis, writing, and a coup d'état (all of which will be discussed in depth in this thesis), I found myself face-to-face with a rather different version of projecthonduras. The online forums appeared to have become very quiet, and activity within the network seemed to be so low that one research contact commented (in a personal email) that "*it will be interesting to see how you deal with a dying process*." Another significant, but somewhat paradoxical, development was the apparent politicisation of the network, including the publication of a book about the 2009 coup by Marco and the controversial participation of prominent political figures in the 'apolitical' network. A scathing critique of the network was published by Adrienne Pine (an anthropologist associated with the Honduran Resistance) and David Vivar (a Honduran sociologist), accusing the network of 'social Darwinism', and of being pawns of the US government, involved in white-washing the 2009 coup (Pine & Vivar, 2010). Clearly there was some activity in the network, but it was not what I had been expecting, nor did it seem to be consistent with the philosophy and aims of projecthonduras.com.

Which was the real projecthonduras? What led to the projecthonduras network becoming recognised not for its development model or for its work with the poor of Honduras, but for its particular political position?

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[4] My Master's thesis, which was completed in 2005, addressed the role of Short Term Medical Missions (STMMs) in Honduras; and how they fit into health service provision in Honduras. It was a qualitative study, based on fieldwork with medical teams in Honduras, which explored the services provided by STMMs. The study found that STMMs have been seen by some as a means of "filling gaps" but questioned whether they are filling real gaps, and if they are, whether they are the most appropriate means of doing so, as there are many limitations to their ability to provide quality services. While not directly measuring the impact of STMMs on population health, the study also discussed the actual and potential impact of STMMs on local health services, and argued that there are potential long-term consequences to their use, including an increasing dependency on outside assistance that may be detrimental to the development of national health services.

Research Questions

In order to address the issues identified above, this thesis essentially answers two sets of questions. The first relate to the early stages of the research and the promise of the projecthonduras model; while the second set, which emerged later, seeks to address the politicisation and the values and understandings underlying the projecthonduras model.

Research aims and questions

1. Explore the projecthonduras model and network:

    a. What is the projecthonduras model?

    b. What are the aims and goals of the network?

    c. How does the model and network function?

    d. What is the role of ICT and 'human capital'?

    e. Who are the participants in the network?

2. Determine if projecthonduras represents an alternative model for development.

    a. What does projecthonduras mean by 'alternative'?

    b. What does projecthonduras mean by 'development'?

    c. Does the projecthonduras model represent an alternative model for development?

3. Identify the underlying assumptions and understandings which could underpin both the 'alternative' development model and the political activity:

    a. What is the nature of the political activity within the network?

    b. What, if any, is the relationship between the development model and the political activity?

This thesis therefore addresses both the early questions about the development model and the structure of the network, and the later ones covering the apparent changes in

projecthonduras, and the underlying values and politics of the network. With these questions answered, this thesis then returns to the question which began the journey: *Does projecthonduras represent an alternative model for development?*

In answering these questions related to projecthonduras this research engages with, and contributes to discussion of some broader questions about the nature of networks and ICT for development, and the role of outside agencies and volunteers in development.

Positioning the Study: At the Intersection

> *So we started out with the concept of ... thinking outside the box, ask questions, start thinking of alternative solutions. Projecthonduras.com is an alternative model for development. Nobody's written a book about it. Nobody's written any studies about it. We're doing this right now. (Marco, welcome speech, conference on Honduras 2008)*

As a student of development studies, projecthonduras' claim to being an 'alternative model' indicated to me a clear position in regard to development theory. Very early in the research process I hypothesised that this placed projecthonduras within the framework of new approaches to development, a position which appears clear in the quote at the beginning of this chapter, which sets this alternative model against the seemingly endless requests for more money that seem to drive conventional development models. One of my early questions was, then, whether projecthonduras fitted within the context of alternative development, or if it represented a post-development model, an alternative *to* development. Certainly, projecthonduras' positive, constructive and apolitical philosophy and its people-oriented approach to social change found some resonance with an emerging body of hopeful development literature. In fact, as already indicated (and as later chapters of this thesis will elaborate), the reality of projecthonduras is considerably more complex than a simple reading of the website would assume.

Epistemological Intersections

Despite the changes in the activity, including the politicisation, of the network the tone of hopefulness and promise evident in early readings of the website stayed with me, and set the theoretical direction of the thesis. As will become clear in Chapter 2, I have some

sympathy for generative post-development discourse (Curry, 2003; Gibson-Graham, 2005; McGregor, 2009; McKinnon, 2007), and yet I am deeply aware of the post-structuralist critique which shows development to be a pervasive social discourse that has had profound, and often damaging, consequences for the 'developing world' (Escobar, 1995; Sachs, 1999; Tamas, 2004). As such this research focuses 'the hopeful/critical lens of post-development" (McKinnon, 2007, p.772) on projecthonduras, and the resulting thesis is therefore positioned theoretically at the intersection between hopeful and critical post-development – aware of the criticism of the concept of development and the destruction that has been wrought in its name, yet not abandoning the hope of development.

In this endeavour I draw from Anna Tsing (2005, p.267) who asks:

> *Might it be possible to use other scholarly skills, including the ability to tell a*
> *story that both acknowledges imperial power and leaves room for possibility?*

I also draw on Gibson-Graham's new ways of "doing thinking", an 'ontological re-framing' (2006, p.xxxix-xxx) which is open to new ideas, and which works to uncover what is possible and creative, but which does not deny critique:

> *This is, we believe, the stuff of a post-development discourse – a mode of thinking*
> *that is generative, uncertain, hopeful, and yet fully grounded in an*
> *understanding of the material and discursive violence and promises of the long*
> *history of development interventions. (2005, p.6)*

The choice of projecthonduras as the focus of this research was profoundly influenced by this theoretical position. As discussed above, the rhetoric of the website shows an acknowledgment of the failures of traditional approaches, and offers an unconventional, positive and constructive alternative. This theoretical position also had on-going implications for the research process and findings. These implications will be addressed throughout this thesis, both in discussion of the methodology and the research findings, which reflect on-going tension between the critique of development and the search for possibility.

Theory and Practice: The intersection of ICT and 'Human Capital'

This thesis also finds itself at a particularly interesting intersection of development theory and practice. The projecthonduras model is based on the networking of 'human capital', using ICT and online social networking tools. These two arms of the model reflect two important contemporary themes in both the development literature and in recent development practice which have attracted significant enthusiasm but also critique.

There is a large degree of optimism regarding the potential of ICT in promoting change. As Chapter 2 will show, proponents argue that for the first time in history the tools for global cooperation are not held by governments or institutions but are in the hands of all (Shirky, 2008). We are told that these will provide new means of organisational and community participation that will lead to a golden age in activism and involvement (Watson, 2009), or to the creation of virtual communities that could generate new forms of political engagement and participation (Bosco, 2007; Rheingold, 1993). This enthusiasm is reflected in the development community, with the establishment of the field of ICT4D (Information and Communication Technology for Development), and in the emergence of new discourses, variously labelled as ICT4D 2.0 and Development 2.0, which will be discussed in Chapter 2 (Heeks, 2009; Thompson, 2008).

The potential – and pitfalls – of ICT for development is also of considerable interest to post-development theorists. Arguments that ICT may offer "unexpected opportunities that groups in the margin could seize to construct innovative visions and practices" (Escobar, quoted in Schech, 2002, p.14), contrast with assertions that much of the ICT discourse is rooted in Modernisation theories (Shade, 2003). This reflects a wider debate about whether ICT aids the global hegemony of neo-liberal ideology, or whether it provides space for alternative, counter-hegemonic views to be heard (Albirini, 2008; Barney, 2004).

The role of 'human capital' – people – in development is also one of great promise and significant debate. While human capital is a term that is primarily used in economics and refers to the knowledge and abilities that are embedded in an individual (Meyer, 2001, p.95), projecthonduras uses the term in a far broader way:

> *By "human capital" we mean things such as energy, expertise, experience, talent, and contacts... resources that really only have value when people become personally engaged. (projecthonduras.com, 2008)*

As will be discussed in Chapter 2, this definition of the term 'human capital' has some similarities with Bourdieu's social and cultural capital. It also highlights a key focus of the network, on people and relationships, and as such, has some resonance with hopeful post-development. For example, Rahnema (1997, p.394) asserts that:

> *the post-development period will distinguish itself from the preceding one if it is able to bring about the 'good, the compassionate and the authoritative' – if the (good people) everywhere cultivate new relationships of friendship, and thereby discover themselves and each other, and learn the arts of listening and being attentive (i.e. to attend) to each other.*

The promise inherent in this understanding of the role of people in development is tempered however, by significant criticisms of development workers as technocrats (Ferguson, 1990; G. Wilson, 2006) and globalisers (Jackson, 2007), reinforcing the inherent Western bias and power imbalances of development.

This debate is even more focused in the case of international volunteers. As Chapter 8 will highlight, the 'human capital' mobilised by projecthonduras is, for the most part, outside volunteers. The enthusiasm shown by projecthonduras towards these volunteers echoes the enthusiasm in much of the literature on volunteering (see for example Bussell & Forbes, 2002; Smith & Elkin, 1980; Wearing, 2001). For example, it has been suggested that volunteering could be a creative and empowering way of mobilising people globally for development that is "based on trust and understanding" (Devereux, 2008), and could potentially shape new thinking and help to 'humanise' globalisation (Lewis, 2005). Nonetheless as with the debates on ICT4D and development workers, the potential of volunteers is also critiqued, volunteers are seen as cultivating dependency (McGehee & Andereck, 2008); and modelling (and thereby promoting) Western lifestyles and consumerism (Roberts, 2004; Simpson, 2004).

These issues will be explored in more depth in Chapter 2. At this point it is important to note the tensions between critique and possibility that are particularly evident in discussions of ICT and of 'human capital' in the development literature and in practice,

and the way in which these reflect each other. As key elements of the projecthonduras model these themes weave through the thesis, with the intersection between them providing the spaces where both the promise and the politicisation of the projecthonduras network are evident.

Contributions to Knowledge: Generative Intersections

With the epistemological and theoretical position of this study located at intersections, it is clear that these intersections are also the location of the contributions to knowledge made by this thesis. These are generative intersections, where seemingly conflicting concepts and ideas meet and produce new insights, deepening our understanding of both the projecthonduras network, and of the broader theoretical themes addressed in the research.

The focus of this thesis is on projecthonduras, and as such, the key findings and contributions of the research relate directly to that network and its role and function in contemporary Honduras. Throughout this thesis the promise of projecthonduras is contrasted with critique, highlighting the contours of the structure of the network, the values, beliefs and motivations of the participants, and ultimately the nature of the development work that they do. In the process, the thesis draws attention to some broader contributions to knowledge that can be drawn from this study.

One of the broader contributions is the intersection of ICT and 'human capital' in development, discussed above. While there is now considerable literature on ICT4D and on the role of people (development professionals and volunteers) in development, the intersection of these phenomena in development has not been widely explored. In a world where anyone with an Internet connection and the means to travel can find volunteer or work opportunities in just about any corner of the globe, and where individuals and organisations in one part of the world can rapidly disseminate information to another, it is becoming increasingly important that development academics pay attention to the point where people and ICT meet. This thesis addresses this gap, highlighting the way in which this intersection is characterised by both promise and critique, and how underlying values, understandings and politics define both ICT and human capital. As such, the results of this research have considerable implications for

the way in which we understand the role of networks and ICT, and of people in development.

The other important junction in this thesis is the epistemological intersection, where the critique of development meets the promise of hopeful post-development. This thesis highlights the complex realities of development, and the tensions that characterise any development endeavour. This is particularly evident methodologically, where the complexity of doing research in a dispersed network and in the midst of political turmoil created openings for Gibson-Graham's (2006, p.xxx) 'ontological re-framing', showing that research can maintain both a voice of hope and of critique. It is also evident in the title of this thesis, which places it at the intersection of politics and promise.

Chapter Outline

This chapter, the first in the thesis, has introduced the research topic, given an overview of the research questions and the theoretical approach, and now concludes with an outline of the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 are literature review chapters. Chapter 2 places this study in its theoretical context, expanding on both the epistemological intersection and on the theory and practice discussion in this chapter, and outlining key theories and concepts in development studies in relationship to the claims of projecthonduras. Chapter 3 outlines the geographical and institutional context of projecthonduras, highlighting the structure and contours of Honduran history, politics and development and positioning projecthonduras within these structures.

The methodology used in this study is outlined in Chapter 4, which explains the unusual choice of an appreciative ethnographic approach. It highlights the complexity of studying on and offline in a dispersed and diverse network; and discusses the process of doing this research with reflections on ethics, researcher positionality and politics.

Chapters 5-8 are largely thick description of projecthonduras. Chapter 5 begins with the founding and history of projecthonduras and the development of the online network and conferences. It then moves on to outline the aims and objectives, and the organisation and structure of the network. Chapter 6 builds on this description, adding a discussion of the

network philosophy and the two arms of the projecthonduras model – ICT and 'human capital'. Both Chapters 5 and 6 highlight the early promise and potential of the network, with Chapter 6 being particularly concerned with examining the promise and potential many see in the network.

Chapter 7 is a more structural analysis of projecthonduras. It begins with the question of the lack of visible activity in the network, and analyses some of the reasons for this. It proposes a model of spaces and layers which explains the way in which the network is structured, and which identifies where effective networking is happening. This leads into Chapter 8 which a description and analysis of the wider projecthonduras network. It asks who the people in the network are, and who they are not; profiles some representative organisations and explores the most prominent organisational and project types within the network.

Chapter 9 and the first part of Chapter 10 are de-constructivist in nature, unpacking the rhetoric and discourse of projecthonduras in order to reveal what is going on under the surface. Chapter 9 examines the discourse around 'helping Honduras' and the ways in which Honduras and Hondurans are depicted within the projecthonduras network, and it also unpacks and explains the projecthonduras development model. Chapter 9 examines this development model through a political lens. It returns to the question at the beginning of this chapter – why and how an ostensibly apolitical network become so politicised. To do this the second half of Chapter 10 takes the 2009 coup as an illustrative historical event, revealing the extent of projecthonduras' support of the coup and the underlying contours of the projecthonduras development model revealed by that event.

As such, this thesis is a study of light and shadow. The strengths and weakness, pitfalls and potential of the projecthonduras network are all examined, dissected and discussed, as are the implications for development theory and practice, drawn from the generative intersections of promise and politics within the thesis. These contributions to knowledge, and the broader questions regarding 'alternative development', will be fully exposed in the concluding chapter. At this point however it is time to step back and look at the wider picture, to examine the theoretical and historical milieu in which projecthonduras and this research are located, and to begin to address the question of what exactly projecthonduras is and where it came from.

Chapter 2: Development Alternatives: Theory and Themes

Projecthonduras was explicitly set up as an alternative model of development, based on utilising Internet and communication technologies (ICT) and 'human capital' – defined by projecthonduras as the skills, experience and knowledge of people and the connections they have—to change Honduras for the better. This is a very strong claim and one that appears to place projecthonduras in a very a clear position in relation to development theory, specifically within the framework of new approaches to development. However, as indicated in Chapter 1, the reality is far more complex than this, and this research therefore raises some thorny questions about the intersection of promise and politics in the projecthonduras model, and whether or not it actually represents an alternative model for development. In order to answer these questions it is therefore important to first examine the broader theoretical background in from which projecthonduras draws its inspiration and justification, and possibly, its rhetoric.

To do this, the first half of this chapter will look at the major debates in development theory, paying particular attention to the "old world" of conventional development and international aid, and the "new world" of development alternatives and alternatives to development. It will also include a discussion of social movements and development, related to projecthonduras' grand vision of becoming an alternative model and an unconventional movement for change in Honduras. The second half of this chapter will look more closely at the main components of this model, networks and ICT, and 'human capital', and how these have been theorised and used in development practice internationally.

Development Theory

An Alternative to What?

By definition, the term 'alternative' denotes a choice, and in particular the choice of a non-traditional or unconventional option. Therefore in order to understand what an alternative might be and why it is deemed necessary, this chapter will first outline traditional, conventional approaches to development. Doing this requires an

understanding of the very notion of development, a heavily debated and contested concept (A. J. Bebbington & D. H. Bebbington, 2001; Escobar, 2000; Pieterse, 2010).

Despite, or perhaps because of, the wide usage of the word development there is surprisingly little consensus amongst development academics and practitioners as to what development actually is, let alone how to go about doing it (see for example Cowen & Shenton, 1996; Pieterse, 2010; R. Potter, Binns, J. Elliott, & D. W. Smith, 2005; A. Thomas, 2000). The past century has seen a plethora of development models, some still with us, some seriously debunked. What is clear is that the liberal capitalist mode of development is currently dominant, often to the point where it appears there can be no social transformation in any other direction (Thomas, 2000, p.774). This is what is now usually referred to as conventional development. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this is consistent with Honduras' experience, where there has been an increasing convergence of agendas as the developed nations (donors) began subscribing to an overarching capitalist development paradigm.

To visualise the development field, Thomas (2000) presented a table of the main views of development – see Table 1. Although somewhat simplistic (there is considerable overlap and contention between these categories) this table shows clearly the spread of ideas in development, particularly as they relate to capitalism: the development of capitalism, alongside capitalism, and against capitalism. In this table the economic growth strategy identified by Marco as an "unsuccessful" form of development fits with the views on the left side of the table, under liberal capitalism; and with the neo-liberal development of capitalism in particular.

Since World War II, the term development has been tightly linked with liberal capitalism, that is, development *of* or *alongside* capitalism (in the left hand column of Table 1, above). Particular emphasis in recent decades has been on neo-liberal development, an approach that explicitly places economic growth as the central goal, to be achieved through market-based strategies; which include privatisation and deregulation; trade and financial liberalization; shrinking the role of the state; and encouraging foreign direct investment (Williamson, 1993; Willis, 2011). In a development context neo-liberalism is also closely associated with structural adjustment programmes (SAPs), policies

implemented by the World Bank and IMF in developing countries, as conditions for the release of new loans or the lowering of interest on existing ones (Willis, 2011).

Table 1: Summary of the main views of development

	Development *of* capitalism	Development *alongside* capitalism		Development *against* capitalism		Rejection of development
	Neo-liberalism	Interventionism		Structuralism	`Alternative' (People-centred) development	`Post-development'
		`Market efficiency'	`Governing the market'			
Vision: desirable `developed' state	Liberal capitalism (modern industrial society and liberal democracy) (plus achieving basic social/ environmental goals)			Modern industrial society (but not capitalist)	All people and groups realize their potential	[`development' is not desirable]
Theory of social change	Internal dynamic of capitalism	Need to remove `barriers' to modernisation	Change can be deliberately directed	Struggle between classes (and other interests)	[not clear]	[not clear]
Role of `development'	Immanent process within capitalism	To `ameliorate the disordered faults of [capitalist] progress'		Comprehensive planning/ transformation of society	Process of individual and group empowerment	A `hoax' which strengthened US hegemony
Agents of development	Individual entrepreneurs	Development agencies or `trustees' of development (states, NGOs, international organisations)		Collective action (generally through the state)	Individuals, social movements	Development agencies

Source: Thomas, (2000, p.780)

Development and capitalism: Neo-liberalism, modernisation and development

Neo-liberalism is the model which now dominates international development policy and social organisation, and is the basis for economic globalisation[5] (Mosse, 2005; Thomas, 2000), however it is not entirely new. It has its roots in a modernisation approach to development, which is in turn based on the idea of progress, the belief that nations can follow a linear path from non-developed or traditional society to a fully developed, modern one. This idea of development as progress along a linear path has been traced

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[5] Globalisation is a term used in a variety of ways. Here I use it to refer to the neo-liberal form of economic globalisation that is based on the expansion of global markets and the free exchange of goods and capital.

back to eighteenth-century political economy (Cowen & Shenton, 1996), although the current usage of the term development is often associated with the period after the Second World War, and in particular to Harry Truman's inaugural address as President of the United States on January 20, 1949. In this speech Truman announced his concept of a "fair deal" for the world, and appealed to the US and the world to help solve the problem of the underdeveloped world, stating:

> *I believe that we should make available to peace-loving peoples the benefits of our store of technical knowledge in order to help them realize their aspirations for a better life. And, in cooperation with other nations, we should foster capital investment in areas needing development" (Truman, 1949).*

While the origins of the term development may be contested, it is clear that over the past sixty years the very definition of the word development has moved from "development in a naturalistic sense to an economic process that needed to be fostered" (Escobar, 1995, p.73). The use of the terms 'development' and 'modernisation' also came to implicitly assume that all nations are destined to achieve the same levels of consumption as the west. This is true of neo-liberal development, where the immanent development of capitalism is held to be sufficient to drive progress (Thomas, 2000, p.779). However it is rare, if not impossible to find a country whose development is driven solely by the neo-liberal development of capitalism, and varying degrees and types of interventionism are usual – this is what Thomas (Table 1) refers to as *development alongside capitalism*.

Intervention in development commonly comes from outside, and is "based on the postulation of an evolutionary scenario in which those left behind in the race for progress could, with the aid of the 'more advanced', catch up and also become modern and developed" (Tucker, 1999, p.7). It is related to the concept of 'trusteeship' discussed by Cowen and Shenton (1996); the idea that those who saw themselves as developed should take it upon themselves to guide those who were seen as less developed (Nustad, 2001, p.483). This concept underpins much of the development industry and the provision of international aid.

Although it could be assumed then that the rise of neo-liberalism would lead to a decrease in aid and development assistance, this hasn't happened: the neo-liberal critique simply

led to changes in the way aid is administered. Under the Washington Consensus[6] there was actually a dramatic expansion of conditional aid lending through the 1980s, and, when that was also criticized in the 1990s, development agencies moved towards the diversification of aid monies to encourage liberal democracy, 'good governance' and human rights agendas (Burnell, 2008). In addition, by encouraging a smaller state apparatus, neo-liberal policies have created space for NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) to assume responsibility for the provision of social and development services. Many have consciously taken on the task of picking up the pieces and providing services where government policy has left off, positioning themselves as "better, more efficient purveyors of services than the state" (Hefferan, Adkins, & Occhipinti, 2009). Global aid agencies and NGOs now carry out a broad range of programmes pertaining to issues of universal concern, including health, human rights, democracy, education and the environment. As Jackson (2007, p.10) states "it is as if (they) say 'if your country has a problem- any problem- there is a global script that can provide the solution. And we are the ones that know the recipe'".

Development against capitalism: Structuralism and alternative development

The neo-liberal 'global script' or one-size-fits-all model of development followed by the global aid agencies is not the only recipe available to developers, and in fact has been widely criticized. As Thomas demonstrates (Table 1), capitalism and development are not necessarily seen as natural allies; rather development can be against capitalism. The origins of this approach are in structuralism, a range of views concerned with underlying social and economic structures and which see development as involving changes in these structures (2000, p.779). Structuralist approaches are in fact not as clear cut as Thomas' table would indicate, with some approaches including dependency theory and the global Keynesian reformism[7] of the new international economic order not necessarily being against capitalism per se, but rather are against unfettered globalisation and dependent development (or underdevelopment) (Pieterse, 1998; Willis, 2011). This section will briefly

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[6] The 'Washington Consensus' was a set of neo-liberal economic reforms that the US government and Washington-based international-financial institutions considered necessary to restore growth in developing nations during the late 1980s and 1990s.

[7] Keynesianism is a macro-economic theory based on the work of economist John Maynard Keynes who believed that government intervention was necessary to assist the economy, including financial redistribution (to boost consumption) and government programmes to increase employment and business activity.

outline dependency theory, a particularly influential critique of development; before moving on to look at alternative development, an inclusive term with roots in structuralist critiques.

Dependency theory

Within development studies and in Latin America the most influential of the structuralist approaches has been the dependency school. Influenced by Marxism, dependency theories emerged in Latin America during the 1960s, partly as a response to the perceived eurocentrism of Marxist theories of imperialism (Munck, 1999), and was based on the work of a group of economists (led by Raúl Prebisch) working in the UN Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) in Chile. Their ideas were developed further by theorists from Africa and Latin America, and the theory gained traction in Latin America in particular as there was considerable disillusionment with modernisation in the region (Bellone Hite & Roberts, 2007). Dependency theory explains under-development as a consequence of outside economic and political influence (Chilcote, 2003; Prebisch, 1962; Dos Santos, 1970). It splits the world into developed (the 'centre') and underdeveloped (the 'periphery'), and argued that the continued underdevelopment of the periphery was the result of domination by the centre, and that the centre actively perpetuated the underdevelopment of the periphery as a source of cheap resources and labour. It particularly rejected the notion that Latin American societies were underdeveloped because they were waiting for capitalist modernisation, arguing that underdevelopment was actively caused by the process of development in the advanced industrial societies, instead describing underdevelopment in the non-West as simply the other side of the coin of development in the West (Gunder Frank, 1967; Munck, 1999).

As with modernisation and neo-liberalism, the core meaning of development in dependency theory is economic growth and capital accumulation (Pieterse, 2010, p.7). However the analysis advanced by the dependency theorists leads to quite different mechanisms for promoting development. Theorising that underdevelopment was the result of participation in the capitalist world economy, dependency theorists believed that development would occur best when countries broke away from the international capitalist system, therefore policy prescriptions included nationalisation of resources,

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import substitution, the protection of domestic industry and limiting foreign investment (Conway & Heynen, 2008; Willis, 2011).

While the dependency school has been enormously influential in development thought, it is now largely out of favour in development practice. Nonetheless 'alternative' or people-centred development often based on structuralist and dependency critiques, have found an enduring position in development practice.

Alternative development

Proponents of alternative development are critical of the capitalist development agenda and of mainstream development practice. They argue that international capital transfers do not automatically convert into productive investment in the receiving country (Korten, 1987, p.146); and see global issues of poverty, environmental failure and social violence as related directly to the failure of development to address the areas of justice, sustainability and inclusiveness. Furthermore, they argued that past approaches to development may actually have exacerbated the problem (Korten, 1990, p.11). These concerns have led to a call for alternatives grounded in the initiatives of popular organisations (Bebbington & Bebbington, 2001, p.7), and crystallized in the 1970s into an alternative, people-centred approach that emphasizes agency, in the sense of people's capacity to effect social change for themselves (Pieterse, 1998). This approach encourages people to mobilise and manage their own local resources, as it is believed that de-centralised, self-organising approaches result in more efficient and productive resource management, reductions in dependence on external resources, increased equity, increased local initiative and accountability, and a strengthening of economic discipline (Korten, 1987, p.146).

Although the term 'alternative development' is often used in a paradigmatic way and there are some key concepts that underlie all alternative approaches, it is by no means a homogenous, unified approach. It has variously been viewed as a critique of mainstream development (moving position as mainstream development moves), a series of alternative proposals and methodologies, or a theoretical break with mainstream development and a paradigm in itself. Since the 1970s it has been "reinforced by and associated with virtually any form of criticism of mainstream developmentalism, such as anti-capitalism, green thinking, feminism, eco-feminism, democratization, new social movements, Buddhist economics, cultural critiques, and even the poststructuralist

analysis of development discourse" (Pieterse, 2010, p.85). To clarify the meaning of 'alternative development' Bebbington, Hickey, & Mitlin (2008, p.5) suggest thinking of 'alternative' in relation to Hart's (2001) distinction between little 'd' and big 'D' d/Development[8]. In that manner little 'a' alternative represents alternatives to the underlying processes of capitalist development, with an emphasis on alternative ways of organising the economy, politics and social relationships in society; in contrast big 'A' alternative development is about alternative ways of intervening and actively managing development processes. This helpful conceptualisation of alternative development will be returned to later in this thesis in relation to projecthonduras' aim of becoming an alternative model for development.

Despite the diversity of 'alternative development', there is considerable consistency in the alternative development literature regarding just who is responsible for development. The vehicle for this process of alternative development is not hegemonic institutions such as the state, the market, political parties or unions, but rather grassroots popular associations and associated NGOs and the local people themselves (Sylvester, 1999; Wilson, 1996). This is different from the role of NGOs highlighted in the discussion of neo-liberalism and development. NGOs adopting an alternative development approach may see themselves as either filling the gaps left by the retreating state, or actively resisting the governmental policies and priorities that have led to gaps in the first place (Hefferan et al., 2009, p.2).

Because of the difficulty in mobilizing local people NGOs are usually considered to be at the front line, based on their perceived ability to reach people and places which governments cannot, their closer links with grassroots organisations, and their insight into the needs and desires of the poor themselves (Drabek, 1987; Porter & Craig, 1997). In this manner Korten (1987, p.156) argues that NGOs have "every right – indeed the obligation – to give voice to their values and experience", and claims that NGOs are often amongst the most active of a society's institutions in helping the poor to achieve a voice of their own.

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[8] Where development with a little 'd' refers to the immanent processes underlying capitalist development, and with a big "D' refers to the process of intervention in the third world (Hart, 2001).

The emphasis that Korten places on NGOs is particularly well highlighted in his book *Getting to the 21st Century* (1990). In this book Korten identified four generations of development action, which were associated with the various roles of NGOs and voluntary organisations: relief and welfare, community development, sustainable systems development and people movements. Korten's first generation strategy of relief and welfare involves the direct involvement of the NGO in the delivery of goods and services (often food, shelter or health care), usually to meet an immediate and temporary shortage or need – the NGO is a "doer". In contrast, second generation or community development strategies focus on building community reliance on a small scale or project level. Organisations move from the first to second generation as they become aware of the limitations of relief efforts and the need for a more developmental approach. Frustration with the limits of second generation strategies leads to longer-term input into sustainable systems development at a regional or national level, which is the third generation. The final generation is what Korten termed a 'people movement' - voluntary, loosely defined networks of people and organisations that are driven by ideas and vision rather than structures and money. This idea of a 'people movement' will be returned to in the next section.

The critique of development has not gone unheard in mainstream development institutions. Although alternative development favours grassroots level development, much of the discourse, including the liberal use of terms such as participation, poverty reduction and empowerment, has been integrated into the programmes and rhetoric of conventional development agencies (Batliwala, 2010; Cornwall & Brock, 2005). This was so successful that in the 1990s it was argued that there was no longer a big gap between mainstream and alternative development, but rather the disparity was between human development (advocated by the UN) and structural adjustment and the `Washington consensus', advocated by Washington-based institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and the US treasury department (Pieterse, 1998).

The focus on people and NGOs in alternative development and the favouring of grassroots level development and de-centralisation find an echo in projecthonduras, a network of mostly small, volunteer-led organisations. It seems entirely plausible that projecthonduras could represent an alternative model that fits within the theoretical

paragigm of alternative development. However there is also resonance with another body of critical literature in development; that of post-development.

Post-development: Rejection of Development?

As seen in the quote from the projecthonduras website at the beginning of this chapter, and the discussion on development and capitalism, projecthonduras appears to reject traditional forms of development. In doing this they reflect an increasingly common concern in society and in development studies, that capitalist forms of development are not working, and perhaps, may be causing further harm. This criticism became particularly evident at the end of the twentieth century as some anthropologists, geographers and others began to generate a "post-development" discourse (Gibson-Graham, 2005, p.5).

As with alternative development, post-development borrows from structuralist and post-colonial analyses of the uneven balance of power in the world, and is aligned with the long leftist tradition of critical analyses that accompanied the development of hegemonic mainstream development theory following World War II (Gibson-Graham, 2005; McKinnon, 2007). However post-development writers take the critique much further, accusing modernist and neo-liberal development discourse of destroying cultural difference, subjecting local communities to the logic of the (Western) market and creating poverty instead of eliminating it, and they called for the abandonment of the modernist development project (Müller, 2006, p.306). Particularly influential publications on post-development thought include James Ferguson's '*The anti-politics machine: development, depoliticisation and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*' (1990); Wolfgang Sachs' '*The development dictionary*' (1999); Arturo Escobar's '*Encountering development: the making and unmaking of the Third World*' (1995); Jonathan Crush's edited volume '*Power of development*' (1995), and '*The post-development reader*' edited by Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree (1997).

It is important to note that post-development is not a single or consistent theoretical position or critique and writers (including those listed above) occupy diverse intellectual and ideological positions, nevertheless they have in common a broadly post-structural approach, much of it based on the work of Michel Foucault. This approach rejects

essentialist explanations of the world and holds that knowledge is inseparable from the language through which we come to know and to communicate what we know (McKinnon, 2007; Simon, 2007; Tamas, 2004). As a result, post-structural critiques of development go beyond the critiques of alternative development, showing development itself to be a pervasive cultural discourse with profound consequences for the production of social reality in the 'developing' world (Escobar, 2000).

The other strong influence in post-development thought is the post-colonial perspective. Post-colonial scholarship has shown 'how the production of Western knowledge is inseparable from the exercise of Western power' (McEwan & Blunt, 2002, p.6). In the context of development, these analyses reveal how indigenous knowledges, livelihoods, and economies lose their value, and are delegitimized or appropriated by the dominance of ''the West'' (McKinnon, 2007, p.773). Sharp and Briggs (2006, p.6) argue that from this perspective, development praxis perpetuates colonialist and Western-centred discourse and power relations, even as it seeks to focus attention on the marginalised; and that international development and development studies can therefore be seen as being in the service of economic and political power and domination.

In this manner, post-development critique is not limited to the analysis of conventional development, but is extended to all forms of 'development' including alternative development discourses. Alternative development, despite its purported more inclusive and participatory approach, is also rejected because it is a product of the same worldview which has produced the mainstream concept of science, liberation and development (Pieterse, 2010). In this sense, post-development writers state they are not interested in development alternatives, but in alternatives to development (Escobar, 1992, p.417), or as Bebbington et al. (2008) define it, little 'a' alternatives.

At its extreme, post-development is synonymous with "anti-development". As Thomas indicates (Table 1) this position characterizes development as an undesirable 'hoax' that strengthens Western hegemony. Development is cast as a "ruin in the intellectual landscape" (Sachs, 1999, p.1), and it is argued that there is nothing that can be salvaged from the inherently flawed process of development (Sharp & Briggs, 2006, p.7). It is in this vein that Escobar (1992, p.413) argues that development has been the mechanism by which the developed nations produce and manage the 'third world', and by which the

individuals, communities and governments of those third world nations were able to recognize themselves as underdeveloped, as "unfinished manifestations of a European ideal". Gronemeyer (2010, p.55) summed up the tenor of this anti-development camp when she stated that: "the times in which helping still helped, certainly in the form of development assistance… are irrevocably past".

While post-development writers are clearly strong critics of development, post-development is not without its own critics. Schuurman (2000) contends that the solution to underdevelopment as proposed by post-development writers is:

> *…often astonishingly naive in its simplicity, i.e. let the poor in the Third World forget about needs which resemble our own needs. Let them forget about wanting a standard of living which the North has… because these needs draw them into the development process with all its implied negative connotations. (2000, p.15)*

This is a refrain taken up by many critics of post-development who argue that for people near the top of the development pyramid to adopt an anti-development stance is politically and/or morally inappropriate, particularly if it means abandoning reflexive engagement with poverty (Simon, 2007, p.208). The argument is that the poor, marginalized and disempowered people of the world would be far worse off if all development efforts ceased.

Related to these accusations of naivety are the some of the strongest and most persistent criticisms of post-development: that it is impractical and unable to offer solutions (Pieterse, 2010; Tamas, 2004). If poverty alleviation and elimination efforts disappear, what is there to replace them? As Simon (2006, p.17) argues, while the controversies over the meanings and tenability of 'development' persist, replacing the term, or underlying concept, will not ultimately address the basic problems of inequality, poverty and powerlessness.

While the projecthonduras rhetoric reflects some concerns that are also evident in post-development thought, and sees little value in traditional, aid-based development strategies (although as later chapters will explore, somewhat paradoxically this is exactly the type of service many participants in the network deliver), the criticism does not extend to an anti-development stance. The projecthonduras model uses ICT to link people and organisations as a new means of doing development, and in this aims to generate an

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'unconventional movement' for positive change in Honduras, a claim that has some resonance with more hopeful post-development perspectives. Before discussing these perspectives it is important to note that while there is no wholesale rejection of development there are still some important elements of post-development and alternative development thought in the language used by projecthonduras, including the preference for solutions that are grassroots and people-led, something which is particularly clear in their use of the term "unconventional movement".

Development and Social Movements

While the critics of post-development are concerned that post-development theory lacks solutions for global poverty and inequality, post-development theorists are not entirely without a means to effect social change. The preference is, of course, for indigenous, local solutions, usually outside of the capitalist system. In particular there is considerable enthusiasm for authentic, grassroots social movements as harbingers of social change (Parfitt, 2002, p.117). The term movement, or 'social movement', is one that is widely used both in popular culture and in scholarly work and which encompasses a wide range of issues and concerns including environmental, gender, debt relief, human rights and anti-corporate/anti-globalisation movements. Despite this wide usage, it is one that is often not well defined. Social movements are most often understood as a group of individuals focused on change, and many of the most widely quoted definitions highlight the idea of conflict and of engaging with 'opponents' (Diani, 2000; Tarrow, 1998). This is not always the case though, and many definitions include collective mobilisations with socio-economic, political and/or cultural dimensions (Mayo, 2005, p.54), for example Eyerman and Jamison (1991, p.4) define social movements as "temporary public spaces, as moments of collective creation that provide societies with ideas, identities and even ideals".

Within development studies the discussion of social movements is clearly associated with post-development, however one of the first to highlight the potential of social movements in development was Korten (1990), who at the time was considered a proponent of alternative development. As noted above, Korten's final generation is a 'people movement'. This fourth generation was an interesting foresight to post-development theory and the interest in social movements that was to come in the 1990s, when they

came seen as a possible answer to the search for alternatives to development (Sylvester, 1999, p.710).

Within post-development, social movements are seen as taking a leading role against the development project and neo-liberalism and in the emancipation of excluded peoples; the result of attempts by people at the grassroots to exert control over previously unaccountable power centres (Parfitt, 2002). Escobar (1992, pp.422-423) contends that social movements are not only a new style of political activity but they can actually be seen as opening the way for the creation of an alternative development anchored in the grassroots. Esteva and Prakash (1998) take this idea even further, completely rejecting development in favour of social movements.

An example of the prominent position of social movements in post-development thought is the Zapatista[9] uprising in Chiapas, Mexico in 1993, which led to an outpouring of scholarly and popular work across disciplines (Edelman, 2001, p.292). This uprising was rapidly seized on as an example both of the rejection of conventional development models by people at the grassroots and as an alternative to development. There was also considerable interest in the use of ICT by the Zapatistas, as they were one of the first social movements to effectively use ICT to spread their message in order to generate solidarity around the world.

One of the defining characteristics of social movements in the post-development literature is that they are focused on authentic, local, grassroots movements with their origin in the struggles and concerns of people and communities in their local contexts, and are therefore idealised as being grassroots lead emancipation or social change. This is not the case with projecthonduras, which as we will see later in the thesis is a network founded and populated with mostly expatriate and US-based organisations and individuals, with little input from the very people they are seeking to help. Arguably, projecthonduras is not an example of a post-development social movement, although it is important to note that projecthonduras does not necessarily claim to be so, using the term 'unconventional movement' rather than 'social movement'. Still the projecthonduras rhetoric points to

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[9] The Zapatista movement began with the rebellion of indigenous groups in Chiapas, Mexico, in 1994, against the neo-liberal North America Free Trade Agreement. While at its core it is a political-military organisation, it has become a broad, extensive network using ICT and other modern means of communication to oppose neo-liberal development (Esteva & Prakash, 1998b; Reygadas, Ramos, & Montoya, 2009).

more than just being an alternative means of doing development. The language used, of 'positive and enlightened ways', as well their self-description as an 'unconventional movement' find resonance with another emerging body of hopeful and positive literature.

Hopeful Perspectives

Hope has long been a driver of development. As McKinnon (2007, p.772) argues,

> *Development has always been embedded in a sense of hope: hope that it is possible to create a 'better world', that human society has the means to do so, and that it can be achieved by harnessing resources and knowledges across international boundaries.*

She adds that despite the critique of development, this hopeful vision "continues to sustain a growing industry and, globally, increasingly diverse actors engage with it as a livelihood for themselves and their communities, and as a means to achieve social change" (p772). As this industry shows no signs of decline, she asks if it might yet be harnessed toward the hopes and desires that "first made the idea of development fly" (McKinnon, 2007, p.772). It is questions like these that have led some to return to 'alternative development' as a more useful conceptualization than post-development, or to argue that post-development should go beyond critique, to explore and emphasize alternatives (Curry, 2003; Gibson-Graham, 2005; McGregor, 2009; Pieterse, 2000; Simon, 2007). It is in this sense that Simon (2006) proposes that it would be useful to differentiate between the conventional and widely rejected versions of anti-development and modernisation-as-development and the more progressive, empowering visions, be they glossed as 'critical development' or 'post-development'.

Moving on from Sachs' assertion that development is a ruin in the intellectual landscape (1999, p.1), this more progressive approach resonates strongly with social constructionist thought, an approach which takes root in the "soil of critique and dead-end despair" of postmodern thought, building from the rubble in "new and more promising directions" (Gergen, 1999, p.30). Gergen writes that "constructionism offers a bold invitation to transform social life, to build new futures", noting that what is needed is generative discourses, ways of talking and writing (and otherwise representing) that "simultaneously challenge existing traditions of understanding, and offer new

possibilities for action" (p. 49). Gergen therefore invites researchers to action, an invitation that is addressed in this thesis in the discussion of Appreciative Inquiry in Chapter 4, an approach to research developed by Gergen.

Another example of this type of thought is Gibson-Graham (2005, p.6), who does not see the post-development agenda as anti-development, rather argues that:

> "*the challenge of post-development is not to give up on development, nor to see all development practice - past, present and future, in wealthy and poor countries - as tainted, failed, retrograde… but to imagine and practice development differently*".

It is this sense of hope that is now being called on in more recent work on development that has been far more constructive and hopeful in orientation (McKinnon, 2007, p.774). However this is not a search for a new hegemony or grand theory of development. As Simon (2006, p.17) argues, while the overwhelming dominance of global capitalism is undeniable, it should not be seen as necessarily disabling of all progressive efforts short of systemic overthrow. In this way, rather than looking to the hope of a future transformed world, of victory over injustice, Gibson-Graham looks for "glimmers of possibility", momentary eruptions that "break familiar patterns of feeling and behaviour" (Gibson-Graham, 2006, p.51).

These glimmerings may help show the way forward. While there is obviously a disregard for hegemonic grand theories, there are a few common threads running through this post-development, post-structural discourse including an interest in diversity and pluralistic approaches, and in the solidarity, conversation and the role of everyday people at the grassroots. The call for a more hopeful approach is underpinned by an increasing acknowledgement of the heterogeneity within development narratives and of the diversity of local practices (Curry, 2003; Gibson-Graham, 2005; Simon, 2007).

There is therefore a call for a consideration of the diversity of cultures and practices in development (see for example, Arizpe, 2002, and Matthews, 2004), and for development that is locally defined and directed. Gibson-Graham (2006) speaks of constructing a language of economic diversity, of reading the economic landscape not for capitalist hegemony but for difference, understanding that development will look different in

differing times and places. This echoes Curry (2003), who argued for the consideration of indigenous and non-market economic relations in development.

Understanding and embracing diversity is one thread in this discourse. Another is the idea of human solidarity and relationships. Bernstein (quoted in Porter & Craig, 1997, p236) puts it this way:

> *What we desperately need today is to… to seize upon those experiences and struggles in which there are still glimmerings of solidarity and promise of dialogic communities in which there can be genuine mutual participation and where reciprocal wooing and persuasion can prevail.*

Although Rahnema (1997) is usually associated with critical post-development, as indicated in Chapter 1, his vision of the post-development period is also clear on the importance of human relationships and conversation, arguing that the post-development period will be distinguished by the cultivation of new relationships, and where people:

> *…thereby discover themselves and each other, and learn the arts of listening and being attentive (i.e. to attend) to each other. (1997, p.394).*

As a network of diverse and scattered people, coming together in "positive" and "enlightened" ways (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2005a), and undertaking a range of activities, there appears to be an intersection between the rhetoric of the projecthonduras.com website and this new literature. There is clearly much promise in the projecthonduras model, promise (and perils) that will be explored in later chapters of this thesis. The remainder of this chapter will explore the themes in development literature and practice related to the second intersection identified in Chapter 1, that of ICT and 'human capital'.

Themes in Development Practice: Towards new forms of co-action and 'helping'

The tensions between critique and possibility are particularly evident in discussions of new approaches to development practice. This is reflected in the title of this section 'towards new forms of co-action and helping' which was taken from Rahnema (1997, p.395), a writer who is usually associated with critical post-development. In the quote from which the title was taken, Rahnema describes a hopeful vision of a

post-development future. He argues that when the 'subjugated' reach the end limits of their possibilities, they need new 'friends', friends in the centres of power and where there is free space for action, friends who will co-act with them. Without clearly identifying how, Rahnema indicates that, ordinary grassroots people are fundamental to a post-development future. This has some resonance with the rhetoric of projecthonduras, which is about building relationships and linking people together to bring positive change, and with the structure of projecthonduras, which is a network dominated by US Americans – people from the centre of regional and global power – who are working in Honduras.

The remainder of this chapter will examine the means by which projecthonduras aims to be an alternative model and an unconventional movement – by linking people and their 'human capital' through information and communication technology (ICT). It will explore further the role of people, and their 'human capital', in a post-development era, and how this co-action and helping might look, before examining the new ICT-based methods and tools used by projecthonduras.com for connecting 'human capital' and enabling co-action and helping.

'Human Capital' for Development

> *Human capital is essentially anything that is not "financial capital". It includes a wide range of resources, including time, energy, talents, experience, expertise, imagination, and contacts – things that are difficult to quantify, but that have very real value. The Internet and other ICT tools now allow us to better make use of human capital, and thus human capital is more valuable than ever before... in my opinion. (Marco, email, 2010)*

As the quote above indicates, projecthonduras sees itself as a network of individuals and organisations, contributing 'human capital' to create an alternative model for development. The explicit goal of projecthonduras.com is to mobilise these individuals and organisations to use their human capital to be "catalysts for change" in a context that is both geographically large (the entire nation of Honduras) and comprehensive (physical, social and economic needs). In order to do this, projecthonduras eschews formal organising and structures, opting instead for an "online portal", and the "engaged" networking of individuals and groups working in Honduras. These people are scattered

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and diverse – "professionals and students, self-employed, working for corporations, organizations, governments, or attending colleges and universities" (projecthonduras.com, 2008). The focus of projecthonduras.com is clearly on people, and on getting people together, rather than on building structures or increasing financial capital.

As noted in Chapter 1, human capital is a term that is primarily used in economics and refers to the stock of knowledge and abilities that is embedded in an individual, and which moves with an individual when they do (Meyer, 2001, p.95). Within economics it refers to the skills and knowledge workers use to contribute to the output of future goods and services (Wechman, 2000, p.51). Less tangible than physical capital, it is embodied in the skills and knowledge acquired by an individual (Coleman, 1988, p.100).

However, on the projecthonduras website the term is used somewhat differently from the economic usage. As the projecthonduras.com website states (and the quote above indicates), within projecthonduras the term is used to refer to the "time, energy, talents, experience, expertise, imagination, and contacts" of an "engaged network of individuals and groups" (projecthonduras.com, 2008). This makes it clear that this is a context where the concept is taken much further than just the added value of skills and qualifications in a commercial setting. While the term is used somewhat un-critically within projecthonduras, the concept is significant as it highlights an often overlooked angle on development theory. While the focus of development theory is often placed on the structures and flows that constitute the global aid and development industry; it is people who carry out the implementation of development projects and programmes, and this is highlighted by the term 'human capital'.

The use of the term 'capital' by projecthonduras also works to "reintroduce capital in all its forms… not solely the one form recognised by economic theory" (Bourdieu, 1983, p.241). As such it appears to reflect many of the aspects of Bourdieu's social and cultural capital, although Bourdieu himself did not use the term human capital. The Bourdiean concept of capital refers to the various types of resources that individuals and groups can mobilise, including prestige, status and authority (symbolic capital); social networks and kin groups (social capital); and culturally valued taste and consumption patterns – including education, a form of cultural capital which can be institutionalised in the form

of qualifications (Bourdieu, 1983; Harker et al., 1990). As such, it could be argued that includes the facets of human capital identified in the quote from projecthonduras: time, experience, talents and imagination (symbolic and cultural capital) and contacts (social capital). As with Bourdiean capital, this capital is invested in individuals (Bourdieu, 1983, p.244), that is in people. In this sense the human capital promoted by projecthonduras could be seen as a composite of Bourdieu's non-economic forms of capital[10].

The particular group of individuals that contribute the human capital referred to in the projecthonduras model are largely development workers and volunteers. Within the literature these people, professional development workers and volunteers, have alternately been praised and criticised for their work; sometimes heroes, sometimes demonised. This section will outline some of the ways the development workers and volunteers are theorised within development, looking at the role of people in development, from the technocrats and 'globalisers' of the modernising development, to the grassroots volunteers of alternative volunteers, leading to the question of what the role of development workers and volunteers is in the post-development world, and in projecthonduras.

Professional development workers

The term professional development worker spans a large group of individuals, working in a variety of organisations across the globe, from powerful, highly paid diplomats in bilateral and multilateral donor agencies, to the local employees of small NGOs. However it is most often applied to expatriate professionals, such as the swarm of expatriate consultants and experts James Ferguson encountered in Lesotho in the late 1970s, "churning out plans, programs and, most of all, paper, at an astonishing rate" (1997, p.223). Although much of the focus in post-development is on people, the enthusiasm does not usually extend to professional development workers, as critique of the

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[10] At this point it is important to note that because the term human capital is an important part of the projecthonduras model and it used extensively throughout the website and forums, it does appear frequently in this thesis; mainly in the context of discussions of the projecthonduras model or where participants have used the term themselves. It should also be clear that unless otherwise stated the use of the term human capital in this thesis refers to Marco's definition (quoted at the beginning of this section).

development industry logically extends to people who work in it, and as the history of the development profession has paralleled the rise of modernisation and later neo-liberal and globalisation agendas.

While development professionals work in a variety of fields both disciplinary and geographic, they have many commonalities in purpose and approach. Chambers (1993; 1997) describes the 'normal professionalism' of development professionals, and how the values, ideas, methods and behaviour that are accepted and dominant reflect 'core' or 'first' biases towards prolonged education, specialist competence, higher wealth and central or urban locations (1997, p.35). He argues that within the development profession this is reflected in preferences for large-scale, capital-intensive and market-linked technology, and by the high professional status of engineers and economists (1997, p. 77).

Chambers' depiction of normal professionalism amongst development workers is also reflected in sociologist Jeffrey T. Jackson's 2007 study of development professionals in Honduras. In his research Jackson found a community of development professionals made up of expatriates and their Honduran colleagues, who were part of a global network of development professionals with a highly specialized role in the global political economy. He characterized them as a "sort of global rent-an-expert service", providing technological know-how and professional skills to developing nations (2007, p.65). However, Jackson took the role of the development professional one step further than simply as experts for hire. As the title of his book "The Globalizers" indicates, Jackson labels development professionals as 'globalizers' in order to draw attention to the idea that development professionals are agents of globalisation, and that as a profession they are linked directly to the processes of globalisation (2007, p. 62), entering the developing world in order to lay the ground work on which global capitalism can grow and to create the conditions necessary for transnational corporations to do what they do (2007, p. 6). This includes health, education and community development activities aimed at "knocking down impediments" to economic growth (2007, p.9).

In this Jackson takes a Bourdiean perspective of globalisation as an economic politics, the product of a "politics put to work by an ensemble of agents and institutions" (Jackson, 2007, p.3). In other words, development workers are seen as the human agents involved in the development of globalisation, working to support the immanent development of

capitalism. Kothari (2005) comes to a similar conclusion in a study of former UK colonial officers turned development professionals, arguing that increasing professionalization within the development industry supports the neo-liberal development agenda.

The role of the globalisers is somewhat akin to that of another term for the development professional – the 'technocrat', authoritative elite technical experts with control over society or government (Wilson, 2006, p.502). Ferguson (1990) uses the term technocrat to describe the way in which development workers reduce poverty to a technical problem, requiring technical answers, and therefore depoliticise the question of poverty. Because of the depoliticised and technical nature of this type of development work technocrats and globalisers are not only concerned with economic agendas, they are interventionists across the board, carrying out a broad range of programmes pertaining to issues of universal concern, including health, human rights, democracy, education and the environment. Jackson's study and the idea of the globalisers is an important one in the context of this thesis and will be returned to in later chapters.

The criticism of professional development workers as technocrats and carriers of global economic and political hegemony has led to some changes and in particular to the re-framing of development workers in alternative development discourse. Rather than a globalising elite of urban-centred development professionals, alternative development would place the "first last" (Chambers, 1997), valuing the knowledge and experience of the people above that of the professional developer. This valuing also led to changes to the form of the international development community, as development workers were no longer just the Western experts or technocrats, but also local village leaders, activists, and NGOs, as well as national and international volunteers, government officials, and advocates (McKinnon, 2007, p.772). Rather than being a technocratic knowledge elite, Wilson (2006, p.519) argues that Western professionals working in a development context should be looking to learn from the populations they seek to develop, and to synthesize new knowledge together with those populations. Chambers (2008, p.164) also advocates learning, particularly face-to-face learning with people in poverty, such as encouraging development professionals to spend more time in 'the field' (for example overnight

immersion trips[11]). He calls this type of development worker the responsible, pro-poor professional; someone who has power over another, but uses it to free and empower others, enabling (or empowering) people to take direct action to meet their own need (Thomas, 2000, p.783).

Volunteerism and development tourists

While development professionals have the most visible role in the development industry, reading through the projecthonduras.com website it becomes apparent that the human capital Marco Cáceres speaks of is largely contributed by volunteers, as the following quote indicates:

> *There are thousands of expatriates and foreigners involved in work to help Honduras. Many of them who travel to Honduras to perform this work consider themselves missionaries, aid volunteers, or just good citizens of the world trying to help their native country or their fellow human beings. (projecthonduras.com, 2008)*

The optimism and excitement with which the projecthonduras network views the potential of volunteers is not unique. By promoting the work of volunteers projecthonduras.com is joining a very popular bandwagon. Cheap air-travel, and communications and media technology that allows individuals to become aware of other cultures and alternative concepts and to build contacts across the globe has fuelled a growing interest in international volunteering (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Lewis, 2005).

This interest in international volunteering is not a new phenomenon. International voluntary service has deep roots in nineteenth century altruistic and missionary movements. Churches and voluntary organisations were an important part of the colonial endeavour and the provision of health; education and social services were often left to these 'charities' as colonial governments focused on other activities (Korten, 1990, p.116). This voluntary effort continued into the early twentieth century, and was joined by the emergence of international peace movements and post-war reconstruction efforts (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Lewis, 2005; Sherraden, Stringham, Sow, & McBride, 2006). Contemporary volunteering varies considerably across cultural groups and contexts.

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[11] While many would question whether an overnight excursion constitutes an "immersion" trip, the idea of spending a night or two outside of urban centres remains a radical one for many development professionals.

Volunteers serve in many different capacities and for varying periods of time, and their service may be considered a tool of international development aid and humanitarian relief, or related to religious duty, political activism, international solidarity, charitable work or professional internships (Lewis, 2005; Sherraden et al., 2006).

While international volunteerism has a long history, faster and cheaper forms of travel have led to a significant increase in short term volunteering, or volunteer tourism[12]. This is a concept which is now in common use in the tourism literature, but which is rarely addressed and sometimes derisively used in development studies literature (Devereux, 2008, p.358). Wearing (2001, p.1), a tourism researcher, uses the term volunteer tourism to refer to those tourists who volunteer in an organised way to "undertake holidays" that might involve "aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research". The emphasis here then, is on the tourism and holiday factors of the voluntary experience. This is consistent with the use of the term 'social tourism' on the projecthonduras.com website, where Cáceres (2002) defines social tourists as "*individuals who travel to Honduras to help out in some way… (who) go to Honduras for a limited period of time, and then… go back home to their families and their jobs*".

As Chapter 1 notes, much of the literature surrounding volunteering for development is explicitly positive, identifying it is something that can potentially shape such new thinking and help to 'humanise' globalisation (Lewis, 2005, p.15). Devereux (2008) suggests that a non-market mechanism like volunteering, in particular long-term international volunteering "might offer a realistic but creative and empowering way of mobilizing people globally for development that is based on trust and understanding". Lewis' (2005) suggestion that international volunteering could potentially shape new thinking and help to 'humanize' globalisation is evidenced in a study of volunteer tourism in an indigenous community in New Zealand. This study found that the intense rather than superficial social interactions that occur during volunteer work could create a new narrative between host and guest that is engaging, genuine, creative and mutually beneficial (McIntosh & Zahra, 2007).

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[12] The line between international volunteerism and volunteer tourism is often unclear and can be interchangeable, with "international volunteering" referring to both long and short term volunteering, and appearing most often in the development literature, and "volunteer tourism" referring to short term volunteering and being the label of choice in tourism writing.

Despite this positivity some research suggests that volunteer tourism may actually have the reverse effect, particularly short term volunteer tourism, reinforcing stereotypes and actively promoting an image of a 'third world other' that is dominated by an 'us and them' mind-set. For example Simpson (2004) and Raymond and Hall (2008) show that international volunteers were able to visit a world in which 'luck' explained inequality, and in which change would come through the interventions of outsiders. Simpson argues that a 'pedagogy of social justice' is clearly missing from many volunteer programmes and that the 'us and them' mentality is reinforced by the inherent inequality of the volunteer experience, where:

> *The processes that allow young Westerners to access the financial resources, and moral imperatives, necessary to travel and volunteer in a 'third world country', are the same as the ones that make the reverse process almost impossible. (Simpson, 2004, p.690).*

Another criticism is that international volunteering cultivates dependency. A host community may become dependent on volunteers and voluntary programmes when these are promoted at the expense of longer term or community driven initiatives. Dependency is also fostered when volunteers undermine the dignity of communities with hand-outs (McGehee & Andereck, 2008; McLennan, 2005). In addition Western volunteers can be seen as 'modelling' a lifestyle of cultural and material values that may be inappropriate, and which promotes modernisation, or development as Westernisation (Roberts, 2004, p.15; Simpson, 2004, p.685).

People in development… in a post-development era

As can be seen in the preceding discussion, the value of the various roles played by people within development is highly contested, with seemingly as many interpretations as there are different functions and activities in the development industry. This is also true within a post-development framework, where critique and praise are offered in equal measure depending on just who is doing the work and how; however, as with the post-development analysis of development itself, the focus is most often on critique. Many of the more general critiques discussed in the preceding discussions of development workers and volunteers are echoed and expanded upon in post-development writing.

Professional development workers take the most criticism from post-development writers. For example the bias towards higher status positions and locations identified by Chambers has also been recognized and strongly criticized. In 1995, Escobar (quoting Pigg, 1992) wrote that to work at the World Bank in Nepal, "you cannot set foot in the real Nepal" (p. 164), referring to the need for development professionals to remain close to the urban centre, relying on official contacts and learning about the needs of the country through the lens of neoclassical economics. However, in critical post-development the analysis is taken beyond a simple critique and true to the rejection of development as a whole, they call into question the need for outsiders to be involved in development interventions at all, even labelling it as dangerous. An example of this is Machila's (1992, quoted in Heron, 1999, p.22) contention that "white (imperial) penetration into Africa… is extremely dangerous", arguing that Northerners may say that they want to assist Africans, yet they come not as learners but as educators.

As post-development writers are particularly concerned to expose the imbalance of power and inherent Western bias of development, they are also interested in exposing the technocrats as agents of Western power rather than neutral helpers. Indeed, it is from this critique of development professionals that the idea of the technocrat emerged, as supposedly neutral experts, offering "assistance" and "cooperation" in situations that imply a non-existent parity of power between the technical helpers and the helped (Cooke, 2004, p.607). However rather than a neutral expert, post-development writers present an image of technocrats designing development programmes even though they "have no local knowledge, have no awareness of different conceptualizations and do not listen, but essentially create blueprint designs that are then implemented" (Wilson, 2006, p.510). Despite his hopeful vision of people and relationships in a post-development era, Rahnema (1997) also alludes to the inability of current development workers to listen. He writes of an "army of development teachers and experts, including well-intentioned field workers and activists... good at giving people passionate lectures about their rights" yet "unaware of the deeper motivations that prompted them to do what they were doing, and knowing neither the people they were working with, nor themselves" (p.392).

Many of these criticisms have also been extended to Western volunteers in development, and are reflected in critiques of volunteer tourism that label it neo-colonialism, claiming

that volunteer programmes are built on the structures of colonialism (Smith & Elkin, 1980, p.151), and it is argued that this results in the 'externalisation of development' – the belief that the impetus for change is based outside of recipient communities (Simpson, 2004). At its extreme, is the argument that international volunteers are a form of imperialism, as their activities boost Western government and neo-liberal interests rather than tackling the root causes of poverty and injustice (Devereux, 2008, p.361).

Despite this critique the role of international volunteering for increasing social awareness and international responsibility is a position that often sits well with post-development literature, and its concerns with the development of social movements and of solidarity (Escobar, 1992), and on people and relationships (Rahnema, 1997). This is shown in a study by McGehee (2002), who investigated the possibility that involvement in international volunteering may lead to future action and found that the network ties formed during a volunteer experience did indeed have a positive effect on social movement participation. She argues that volunteer tourism presents a unique opportunity for exposure to social inequities, as well as environmental and political issues, and this can subsequently lead to increasing social awareness, sympathy, and/or support (McGehee & Santos, 2005). This people-based approach is also seen in a study of Internet-based NGOs in Argentina which concluded that solutions to fundamental problems can be found at the level of relationships, and that ultimately social relations are the critical tool (Bosco, 2007).

This conflict between volunteers as neo-colonisers and volunteering for social awareness and solidarity was also the focus of a study by Tubb (2006) who used anti-development discourses to look at the narratives of international volunteers. Tubb found considerable potential for volunteers to emulate and facilitate a 'new commons' in development, one that ultimately reflects alternative ideologies of participation and self-direction. She argued that rather than reinforcing the traditional developer/recipient relationship framed in Western languages of paternalism, volunteering offers a new point of engagement that simply offers a platform in which new discourses of anti-development can be acted out in practice. This conclusion certainly seems consistent with generative post-development discourse, which acknowledges the critique of the concept of

development, in this case the critique of volunteerism; while looking towards more hopeful and constructive possibilities for development and the role of volunteers.

Networking and ICTs in Development

The second key tenet in the projecthonduras model is use of ICT for networking. This is an area gaining increasing attention both in development practice and in academia as the use of ICT-based networks becomes ubiquitous across the globe. This section will outline the rise of networking in society and in development, and the implications of the rapid growth and spread of ICT. It will then examine in some depth the role of ICT in development, and the promises and perils of Internet technology in relation to post-development thought.

Networks and the Networked Society

In the quote at the beginning of this chapter, projecthonduras.com was defined as an 'engaged network' of people involved in grassroots work in Honduras. While the term network has become ubiquitous in modern society, and in development organisations, it is one that has a wide range of uses and intended meanings. Most obviously, it has a physical meaning, as an arrangement of lines, a transport system or a group of interconnected machines, but it is also used to refer to the way many groups are now organising. Technically, a network simply consists of distinct points (people, computers, firms), often termed nodes, which are related to other nodes by connections called ties. Flows (financial, material, communication) move along ties between these nodes. A network exists where many nodes are linked to many other nodes, formally or informally (Barney, 2004, p. 840). The use of the network concept has become so pervasive that it has generated a whole new field of research and related discussions on its impact on societies (Diani, 2000; Escobar, 1999). One of the best known and comprehensive of these is Castell's 1996 book *Network Society*, which has led to the defining of postmodern society as just that; the network society.

There is a large degree of optimism in the literature regarding the network society and the potential of networks. Networks are considered to be characterized by flat, non-hierarchical structures, and voluntary and reciprocal forms of communication and exchange (Henry, Mohan, & Yanacopulos, 2004, p.839; Keck & Sikkink, 1998, p.8). Henry

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et al. note that they promise to be "innovative, responsive and dynamic, while overcoming spatial separation and providing scale economies" (p.839), while Castells (1996, p.470) himself argues that "networks are open structures, able to expand without limits". These characteristics have made the networked form of organisation very appealing to civil society (Henry, Mohan, & Yanacopulos, 2004, p.839) and, as later discussion will show, to post-development thinkers.

The rise of the networked society is reflected in the development literature and in practice. The following table (Table 2) shows some of the diversity of networks in development. It is drawn from three sources: a study by Reilly (2005) which identifies a range of civil society organisations using ICT-based networks; a typology of transnational development networks proposed by Henry, Mohan and Yanacopulos (2004, p.841), and my own research and observation. Note that these lists include both formal, intentional networks, and informal associations.

Table 2: Development Networks

Transnational	International NGOs and multilateral agencies, international-level policy makers, international social movements and advocacy groups, diasporic groups
National	National social movements and advocacy groups, national-level policy makers, NGO umbrella organisations
Local	Community level social networks, community based NGOs

Source: Author

As Table 2 illustrates, transnational networks within development include international NGOs and multilateral agencies, international-level policy makers, international social movements and advocacy groups, diasporic groups and international volunteer networks. This table is not exhaustive, and obviously there is considerable overlap and movement between the levels, but it gives some indication of the range of networks in development. As a network of Hondurans and friends of Honduras located both within and outside Honduras, projecthonduras appears to sit at the top of this table, as a transnational development network. Of particular relevance to this study are NGO networks, international social movements and diasporic groups.

A transnational network is simply a network whose reach extends across national boundaries, and where the individuals and organisations making up the network are located in geographically diverse locations. Many of the activities of the world's civil society, business and government sectors are now conducted through transnational networks. These sometimes large and global networks are not a particularly new phenomena, Keck and Sikkink (1998), for example, trace the history of transnational networks back to the anti-slavery movements of the 18th and 19th centuries, they have, however, become increasingly prominent with the spread of ICT.

Despite the popularity of the concept of networks, it remains difficult to find self-identified, deliberately constructed transnational networks amongst NGOs. This is despite the fact that networking has become an integral part of NGO jargon, and they are usually part of an international network of relationships that make up what is often termed the aid chain (Bebbington, 2004, p.729). The lack of obvious NGO networks may be because organisations that use the Internet for networking are often not perceived as being NGOs. Transnational NGO networks are more often known simply as 'network organisations', with traditional, centralised NGOs being subsumed into the network. An example of this is the Jubilee 2000 network[13]. Jubilee 2000 is also an example of an issues-based network, or social movement, many of which have appeared over the past decade or so. As Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington (2007, p.1714) argue, there are close links between social movements and NGOs and the success of social movements is improved when they work with traditional NGOs who have the technical and intellectual capacities to help generate the knowledge in order to expand discursive space in order to consider alternative ideas for development. Indeed, new social movements are among some of the fastest growing networks, and some of the earliest and most significant research regarding transnational networking is on the topic of social movements and advocacy networks (e.g. Esteva & Prakash, 1998; Keck & Sikkink, 1998; Myers, 1994).

Another emerging set of networks in civil society and development is migrant networks and organisations (Faist, 2008). While past discussions often focused on the 'brain drain' and losses to the developing world associated with migration, more recent attention has

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[13] Jubilee 2000 was a movement led by an international coalition of activists and NGOs in over 40 countries who called for cancellation of third world debt by the year 2000. The name came from the Catholic Church's Great Jubilee, a celebration of the year 2000.

turned to the benefits arising from harnessing the diaspora (Lucas, 2001; Meyer, 2001; Plaza & Ratha, 2011). In particular, there is considerable optimism regarding 'diasporic networks', which are involved in a range of development oriented activities, including capacity building in home countries, economic remittances and international advocacy. Brinkerhoff (2004, pp.411) suggests while not a magic bullet for development, diaspora groups "offer promise in terms of expanding global networks and improving relevance, responsiveness and representativeness to local needs" and "represent a wealth of information, human resources, skills and networks that can be mobilised".

While there is considerable variation in the size, type and focus of transnational networks the optimism with which they are viewed is much the same. Also similar is the mode of operation, which is increasingly Internet-based. It is to a discussion of the role of ICT and ICT-based networks we now turn.

ICT4D and beyond

The rise of the network society is linked to the rapid growth and spread of ICT. Because of the volume of information that can be handled, the speed at which it can be delivered and the resulting globalisation of trade, migration, travel, development and science, ICT has revolutionised all sectors of the "connected" society. It has also enabled the expansion of networks on a global scale and has galvanised the concept of networks to describe new ways of being in, and understanding the world (Henry et al., 2004; Knox, Savage, & Harvey, 2006; Warkentin & Mingst, 2000). This is reflected in the emergence of networks such as projecthonduras:

> *ICT does more than just contribute to our organizational objectives--our organizational objectives are entirely dependent on the use of ICT. As a cyber-based network, our very existence is as a result of information and communication technology…What is unique about projecthonduras.com is that it has pioneered the use of ICT for the purpose of development. Using ICT for this purpose has not yet been fully explored, and projecthonduras.com will continue to seek new ways to use ICT to identify, channel, organize and mobilize people in service of development (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2004).*

Contrary to Marco Cáceres comment in the quote above, the use of ICT for development has been well explored in past two decades. This is evident in the emergence of the field of ICT4D. The term ICT4D is used to refer to a growing area of practise and research which is concerned with the use of ICT either to help overcome the "digital divide"[14] or to assist NGOs and governments in development work (Heeks, 2009; Pieterse, 2010; Unwin & de Bastion, 2008). It is widely used in the international institutions, including the UN (with the ICT taskforce in 2001), the G8 (who established the Digital Opportunity Task Force or DOT Force in 2000) and the World Bank (Unwin & de Bastion, 2008, p.56). Proponents argue that ICT has the potential to "flatten the playing field" between rich and poor nations (Friedman, 2007), to reduce inequalities (Unwin, 2009), and to transform development processes and alter the balance of power (Heeks, 2010).

While early ICT4D literature and practise was concerned with reducing the digital divide, it is the potential of networked social interaction and Web 2.0[15] that has captured much recent attention (Thompson, 2008). Some of this has been purely technical, with an emphasis placed on the importance of mobile communications, the increasing ubiquity of network-enabled applications, and a movement to the generation of user-based content (Silva, 2009). This is evident in the emerging field of Web2forDev, a term coined in 2007 by a group of development practitioners and academics interested in the ways in which Web 2.0 could be used in development contexts, particularly in agriculture, rural development and natural resource management (Addison, 2009; Barth & Rambaldi, 2009). Similarly, Heeks (2008) argues for 'per-poor' innovation in ICT4D[16], innovation that occurs within and by poor communities, enabled by Web 2.0 and mobile technologies that mean that the poor themselves can become innovators. While not framed as 'alternative development' in the literature, this use of ICT for development can be seen as a big 'A' alternative, using ICT and Web 2.0 as an alternative means of intervening in developing contexts (see Bebbington et al., 2008).

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[14] "Digital divide" is a term introduced in the 1990s to refer to differences in access to computers and the Internet between richer and poorer communities and regions (Unwin, 2009, p.26). While this remains the major concern of ICT4D it is beyond the scope of this thesis (which focuses on the use of social networking tools by the projecthonduras network) to explore in depth the literature around the digital divide.

[15] The term Web 2.0 describes the appearance of free or low cost web tools and applications used to create and publish information or to collaborate and share resources online.

[16] Heeks (2008, p.30) defines 'per-poor' innovation as innovation that occurs within and by poor communities, and contrasts this with 'pro-poor' innovation which occurs outside poor communities, but on their behalf, and 'para-poor' innovation which is done working alongside those communities.

Noting the changes in the focus of ICT4D, Heeks (2009) suggests we are now entering a new phase in ICT4D, that of ICT4D 2.0. This is much the same as the way Thompson (2008) writes of development 2.0, arguing that the increasing use of ICT by people in development contexts means that ICT has become not just an assemblage of hardware, software and user behaviour, but an "architecture of participation" (p.825). Thompson highlights what he considers to be the considerable power of ICT-enabled social networks to transform the dynamics of group interaction, potentially driving increased calls for a much more plural and collaborative development. This echoes the claims of Web 2.0 proponents more generally, that for the first time in history the tools for global cooperation are not held by governments or institutions, but because of their low cost and ubiquity, are in the hands of all (Shirky, 2008), and that these new social networking tools provide new ways of organisational and community participation that will lead to a golden age in activism and involvement (Watson, 2009). This optimism for ICT has advocates in high places, as indicated by this quote from British Prime Minister Gordon Brown at the TEDglobal conference in 2009:

> *Now take therefore what modern technology is capable of: the power of our moral sense allied to the power of modern communications and our ability to organise internationally. That in my view gives us the first opportunity as a community to fundamentally change the world.*

This is what Heeks (2010) refers to as the transformational potential of ICT in development, new ICT-enabled models that can transform the processes and structures of development. In this sense they can be seen as a little 'a' alternative, with Web 2.0 potentially opening up new ways of organising the economy, politics and social relationships in society.

Networks & ICT: Development 2.0 or Modernisation 2.0?

This intersection between development networks and ICT is a space of considerable interest to post-development theorists. There is certainly some agreement between post-development and development 2.0. As noted in Chapter 1, Schech (2002, p.14) suggests that ICT may offer what Escobar has described as "unexpected opportunities that groups in the margin could seize to construct innovative visions and practices". Escobar has also argued that that networks offer unprecedented possibilities for

alternative social, cultural and political practices (1999, pp.32,52). Indeed the rise of ICT and social networking has had particular importance for small, marginalised groups in networking and promoting their political agendas (Juris, 2004). This is also consistent with research by Katz (2006) who found that there is evidence that the networked infrastructures are conducive to the development of a counter-hegemonic bloc, providing Western bias within existing structures is decreased.

However, the increasing popularity of networks and ICT in development practice is not without criticism. On one level there is the argument, applicable to any non-face-to-face participation, that online social movements are less authentic and may not portray reality accurately (Russell, 2001, p.362), and that the online context may inhibit trust, make it difficult to reach consensus and limit participation to those able to use the dominant language, usually English (Clark & Themudo, 2006, p.54).

There also continues to be on-going debate about whether ICT provides space for alternative, counter-hegemonic views to be heard or if it aids the global hegemony of neo-liberal ideology. This is because although ICTs are usually regarded as "neutral, transparent media which function as conduits for the information and knowledge required to develop" (Schech, 2002, p.13), the development and proliferation of network technology (and therefore the network society) is intimately linked with economic globalisation and the neo-liberal model (Barney, 2004, p.72). Some have observed that the phenomenal growth of ICT and the simple equating of technology with development is a resurgence of modernisation discourse, possibly even a new form of modernisation that Shade (2003) terms "Modernisation 2.0". As such, Pieterse (2010, p.170) argues that ICT4D implies a development model, one that recycles conventional modernisation thinking, pointing out the way in which ICT promotion serves as a rationale for trade and investment liberalisation, and privileges Western content and Western intellectual property rights. This new modernisation is not the State-centred development of the past, but is towards decentralised networks, and is very much in tune with neo-liberal discourse which views knowledge as the most important resource for economic growth (Wilson, 2003, p.393). This new modernisation is particularly apparent in the early ICT4D

approach, and in the discourse of large international institutions such as the World Bank[17].

At the point of writing, there has not yet been a critical response to the ICT4D2.0 or Development 2.0 discourses. These emerging ideas retain a sense of hope and optimism, yet as Thompson himself acknowledges, there remain significant inequities in hardware and supporting infrastructure, and "such concepts may be far from the thoughts of those who dwell far from networked infrastructures in rural or possibly conflict-laden circumstances, often existing on less than a dollar a day" (2008, p.832). With the continued Western-centric and neo-liberal bias of existing Internet services it is clear that much of the critique of Modernisation 2.0 can be applied to ICT4D2.0/Development 2.0. Certainly until the underlying issues regarding the digital divide and inequality are resolved it is difficult to imagine how these 'new' approaches will work.

What is clear from this discussion is that, as with 'human capital', there is clearly both considerable promise and significant contention over the role of networks and ICT in development. Perhaps the answer is with Escobar who argues that while networks could be the location of new political actors and the sources of promising cultural practices and possibilities, they are "only as good as the ensemble of human, natural and non-human elements they bring together and organize", reminding readers that they are part of a larger world that may be "inimical to their aims" (1999, p.32).

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[17] The World Bank Development Gateway has come in for particular criticism. The Gateway was designed as a one-stop web-based knowledge portal offering services and tools to access, share, and discuss development information and knowledge (Development Gateway Foundation, n.d.). For all its seemingly admirable purpose, it has been the target of considerable criticism, in particular regarding the control the Gateway's editors have over the content of the database (Van Der Velden, 2003). This is of concern as the output of web portals tends to reflect the interests, biases and limitations of its creators, and because of the size and power of the World Bank, an initiative like the Gateway could crowd out or unfairly compete with, portals that reflect other realities (Roman, Colle, & Hall, 2003, p.87). Indeed, Wilks (2002, p.327) argues that although the Gateway maintains that it is a neutral vehicle for presenting knowledge, it is in fact "conceived, designed and operated in a way that systematically excludes certain voices and perspectives".

Locating Projecthonduras in the Literature

The post-development future envisaged by Gibson-Graham, McKinnon, Rahnema et al. discussed earlier in this chapter is one of diversity mixed with solidarity, one that leans towards "glimmers of possibility", and that is imbued with a sense of hope. However reaching that alternative or post-development future will require not only a change in how development is perceived, but also new practices: a new set of tools that are compatible with the underlying philosophy. While this is where post-development theorists have met some of their strongest criticisms in the past, often being unable to describe how their visions of a post-development future may be translated into reality, there is hope in the writing of some post-development scholars who have argued that actors – that is the people – in development practice meet and move in a networked space, where they can share and contest development knowledge (Escobar, 1995, quoted in Bosco, 2007, p.70).

This networked and relational approach to development is being illustrated by many civil society and grassroots groups who are appropriating networked technologies and the network form in order to create alternatives in practice. Social movements are at the forefront of this, using innovative means of communication and networking to spread their messages and promote change. It is also reflected in the growing interest in Web 2.0 for development, and in the new discourses of ICT4D2.0 and Development 2.0, where new architectures of participation and the multipurpose nature of make them "enablers not just of the business plans of large companies and power fantasies of governments, but of the hopes and choices of grassroots NGOs, micro-entrepreneurs and individuals who use the technologies in their own ways" (Kleine & Unwin, 2009, p.1063).

While Rahnema may have been somewhat vague about the nature of "co-action and helping", it is possible that relational networks, social movements and international volunteering are some of the diverse options available. However Rahnema also sounds a note of caution about intervention (1997, p. 395), noting the dangers, ethical dilemmas, limits and possibilities of intervention, and weighing the possibilities of co-action and helping against the 'project of intervention'; a comparison that raises questions about where the boundary is, and where intervention reverts to being conventional aid or 'development'. This reflects the reality of development practice, an environment where

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strategies such as volunteerism and ICT based networks can equally complement a neo-liberal development model as a post-development one.

While projecthonduras.com purports to be an alternative model and unconventional movement, it remains to be seen to what degree it is a model for a new development, rather than just a new tool for conventional development approaches. As noted in Chapter 1, this is a key question addressed by this research. This chapter has placed the rhetoric of projecthonduras within the theoretical milieu of development studies, and I have argued that there are elements of both alternative development and post-development within the self-description. The question of where projecthonduras is placed theoretically will be returned to in this thesis, in the analysis of the network and the community that constitute projecthonduras.

A further aim of this chapter has been to articulate a theoretical base from which to build the remainder of this thesis, which finds itself at the intersection of post-development and post-structuralism, and of the critique of development and the search for possibility. The tension between these approaches is mirrored in later chapters of this thesis, as it is within projecthonduras itself.

Chapter 3. Honduras: History, Politics and Development

> *I believe that it is precisely Honduras' almost singular emphasis on economic growth that has kept the country from developing. This unsuccessful strategy has been enthusiastically supported by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It's all been primarily about "capital formation" through stimulating agricultural and industrial output and job creation… which, in turn, leads to more capital formation and yet more economic growth. But this is not one-in-the-same as "development". (Marco, Facebook note, May 2008)*

"Emphasising the need for more money" (see quote at the beginning of Chapter 1) is something that Honduras, as with most poorer nations, is well used to doing. Honduras has a long history of external influence and intervention which dates back to Spanish colonialism, and which continues to this day through the activities of a myriad of development agencies both large and small. Despite a flood of aid Honduras continues to have one of the highest rates of poverty in Latin America. It is this situation which Marco is alluding to in the quote above, and which is the impetus behind the formation of projecthonduras as an 'alternative model'.

While the previous chapter outlined the theoretical and global development context in which projecthonduras has emerged, this chapter takes a more focused look at the specific historical, political and cultural context from which projecthonduras originated and in which it currently operates, before examining in more depth the development industry and volunteer tourism phenomenon within Honduras. Placing projecthonduras within the Honduran context provides a background to the arguments regarding the construction of development and the politics underlying the projecthonduras model which I will be presenting in later chapters.

Honduras – History & Politics

Honduras has long been considered a poor nation and at the beginning of the twenty-first century it remains one of the poorest nations in the region. According to the Honduran Institute of Statistics (INE) 66.4% of the Honduran population in rural areas and 55.4% in

urban areas is poor[18], and that 35.9% are extremely poor (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2007). In 2010 Honduras was ranked 106th on the Human Development Index (HDI)[19], with a score of 0.604, and has a GDP of just $3845 (UNDP, 2010). While arguably not desperately poor as a nation (an HDI of 0.604 puts Honduras squarely in the UN category of 'medium' human development), there is a long lasting perception amongst Hondurans that Honduras is poor. This underdevelopment is often attributed to its rugged landscape and isolation (Haggerty & Mille, 1993), but a review of Honduran history and development indicates there is far more to the story than this. Honduran history reverberates with the themes of foreign penetration and dependency (Schulz & Schulz, 1994, p.23), and it is in this that we can find clues to Honduran poverty in the twenty-first century.

The Colonial Era

Accounts of Honduran history often begin with the arrival of the Spanish in the 1520s, however prior to their arrival the territory that is now Honduras was home to various indigenous groups including the Pipil, Ulva, Paya, Sum and Lenca peoples; and the descendants of the ancient Mayan civilisation, whose abandoned city of Copán in Western Honduras (a major ceremonial centre and thought to be a leading centre in astronomical studies in the ancient world) is now a national tourist attraction (Leonard, 2011). As in many parts of the world, the arrival of Europeans led to the decimation of these ethnic groups through disease, mistreatment and the exportation of large numbers to the Caribbean Islands as slaves, and now only a few very small groups of indigenous people remain hidden in the mountains of Honduras. Much of the current population is of Mestizo or mixed descent, with a significant number of black Caribs or Garifuna peoples (descendants of African slave populations in the Caribbean) on the North Coast (Leonard, 2011).

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[18] The poverty line is constructed from the cost of a basic basket of foodstuffs (the "canasta basica") yielding a minimum number of calories a day. A household is considered "extremely poor" if its per capita earnings are less than the cost of this basic basket of food. The poverty line for the "poor" is constructed from a basic basket of goods that includes housing and education services in addition to the basic basket of food (Gindling & Terrell, 2010, p.911).

[19] The Human Development Index (HDI) is a ranking tool devised by the UNDP to classify the human development of countries based on life expectancy, education and Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

The Spanish conquest of Honduras was relatively short, but bloody. A final, major uprising against the Spanish in 1537, led by a Lencan leader named Lempira, was ultimately unsuccessful, although Lempira became a hero in Honduras, and his name lives on in the Honduran currency, the Lempira (Leonard, 2011). Following the defeat of Lempira the fighting declined and Honduras entered a more settled period. During this long colonial period Honduras was formally a province of the Captaincy General of Guatemala (which was itself administered by Mexico) however it remained a provincial backwater. Most of the population were isolated, rural subsistence farmers, and the local elites relied on silver mines, a tobacco factory and the domestic cattle market for their wealth (Euraque, 1997; Haggerty & Mille, 1993).

On September 15 1821, Honduras, along with other Central American provinces declared their independence from Spain. This move to independence was peaceful, perhaps because it was made by the Captaincy General in order to "prevent the dreadful consequences resulting in case Independence was proclaimed by the people themselves" (Euraque, 1997, p.1). The new Central American Federation was short-lived however, collapsing in 1838. Honduras then gained full independence.

Honduras was a nation born into debt, saddled with loans taken by the Central American Federation, and plagued by rivalries and internal conflicts – over the next 61 years there were 62 Honduran Presidencies. Foreign intervention became commonplace as liberal-conservative conflicts from across Central America inevitably spilled into Honduras (Schulz & Schulz, 1994, p.6). During this time Honduras was exporting gold and silver, cattle and hardwoods, mostly to the USA and England. Export growth was, however, limited by the civil conflicts and by the poor state of the national infrastructure including a lack of capital, technology and transportation.

The Era of Imperialism

Honduras' debt problems continued into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In order to stimulate economic growth the Honduran government took on multiple large loans throughout the 1800s to build a railroad from the port to the interior. By the 1890s the debt was so great that Honduras had the highest per capita foreign debt the world had ever known, and it was estimated that Honduras would be unable to repay it even by selling

its entire national territory. Indeed it took Honduras until 1953 to finish paying the debt, and still the railroad was never completed (Euraque, 1997, p.4; Schulz & Schulz, 1994, p.7).

Schulz & Schulz (1994) label the railroad fiasco as an omen. They argue that the country was still largely pre-capitalist and semi-feudal, and that political and economic stagnation of the nineteenth century had prevented both the formation of a strong national state, and a national bourgeoisie. Neither the state nor the private sector had the resources to build a primary export economy, and as a result of the country's dependency it appeared to have little option but to continue to seek foreign investment (Schulz & Schulz, 1994, p.7). Under the presidencies of Marco Aurelio Soto and Luis Bográn in the late 1800s the State introduced significant economic incentives to attract foreign investment, the first beneficiary of which was the New York and Honduras Rosario Mining Company formed by a group of New York investors including Washington S. Valentine. Valentine's influence was pervasive and so well known that as a result of his exploits to secure privileges in Honduras he was given the title "King of Honduras" in New York (Euraque, 1997, p.6; Mahoney, 2001, p.173).

For centuries much of Honduras' export income was derived from mines such as those operated by Valentine's company, however by the beginning of the 20th century the mining boom was over. During the last years of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th, the banana industry, dominated by US fruit companies, grew rapidly. In particular three fruit companies- Standard Fruit, the Cuyamel Fruit Company and the United Fruit Company (UFCO) were able to obtain significant concessions from the government, to buy up lands, and to establish what Schulz and Schulz term a "virtual enclave community" on the North Coast (1994, pp.10-11). This enclave community was one with a wide reach, as Euraque (1997) argues; it was central in the emergence of Honduran political culture.

The rise of the banana industry brought wealth to a few but the price for Honduras was steep. The massive influx of foreign capital overwhelmed the domestic economy, and with the concessions given to the company there was little return to the State by way of taxes. Mahoney (2001, p.193) argues that this situation put national sovereignty at risk, a situation made worse by the behaviour of the company directors who did not hesitate to

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exploit the political weakness of the Honduran State, including bribing government officials, providing loans to desperate governments and even financing the overthrow of presidents (Euraque, 1997, p.7; Schulz & Schulz, 1994, pp.8-9). The expansion of US businesses was also defended militarily by the US government – the North Coast of Honduras was subject to seven separate US military interventions in the early twentieth century, although Honduras never experienced a full-scale occupation (Soluri, 2005, p.11). The power of the banana companies is well illustrated by a quote from a UFCO public relations officer who called it "the conquest of Honduras" (Euraque, 1997, p.7). It is also reflected in the term "banana republic", coined in the early twentieth century to describe Honduras (Pine, 2008; Soluri, 2005).

While US business interests had a large stake in the Honduran banana industry, the North Coast commercial-industrial sector was increasingly dominated by another group of investors – immigrants primarily from Palestine, commonly referred to in Honduras by the pejorative term 'Turcos" (Turks)[20]. These immigrants were very successful and soon controlled a significant percentage of commerce and industry on the North Coast, forming the basis of a powerful bourgeoisie that grew steadily in importance in Honduran political culture (Euraque, 1997; Rockwell & Janus, 2003).

Caudillismo

The emergence of the North Coast elites was part of a rapidly changing political environment in Honduras. North American interventionism decreased from the 1930s as Honduras, like many other Latin states, fell under the power of a strong man, or "caudillo"[21], President Carías, a general in the Honduran army and one of the founders of the Honduran National Party. Carías won power through an election, but extended it for 17 years through various un-constitutional means. Although essentially a dictatorship, Carías time in office was a period of relative peace and order during which time the army was modernised, and the country's fiscal situation, education and the road network all

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[20] These were small groups of mostly Christian Palestinian immigrants (although there were also Turkish, Lebanese and Syrians) who settled mostly on the Honduran North Coast in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Most were en route to the US but ended up staying in Central America for financial or other reasons.
[21] A Caudillo is a particular type of Latin American leader, often a chief or a military leader who holds a powerful, usually political position, operating in effect as a patron. Caudillismo or Caudillo politics is therefore a political system in which patron-client relationships dominate, and patronage is the currency of politics (Taylor, 1996).

improved. Not surprisingly however, Carías presidency was not a high point for Honduras democratic institutions as opposition and labour movements were suppressed and national interests were at time sacrificed to benefit Carías' interests or those of his friends and relatives (Euraque, 1997; D. E. Schulz & Schulz, 1994). Carías' rule ended in 1948, when, under pressure from the fruit companies, the Honduran elite and the US State Department and facing considerable civil unrest, he finally called elections,

Although US government intervention had decreased during this time, the power of the fruit companies continued to climb. In 1933 a US diplomat noted that there was "not an important government functionary in its north-east zone who was not under obligation to the (UFCO) company" (Schulz & Schulz, 1994, p.17). The Minister of War, the President of Congress and the head of the Supreme Court were all lawyers for UFCO, as was the next President of Honduras, Juan Manuel Gálvez. Journalists who criticised the company were silenced with bribes or "disappeared". However the fruit companies were not the only powerful actors in Honduras in the mid nineteenth century. In 1949 the International Monetary Fund (IMF) entered Honduras to assist with the creation of the Central Bank and the National Development Bank, and was soon followed by a growing network of development agencies including USAID, many of the United Nations (UN) agencies, the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA), international labour federations and various religious aid organisations (Ensor & Ensor, 2009, p.28). The power and impact of these external agencies will be discussed in more depth in the second half of this chapter.

The Great Banana Strike

In the early 1950s the UFCO was still the most powerful corporation in Honduras, and it brought significant resources to an otherwise impoverished and undeveloped region. However there was considerable resentment towards the concessions the company continued to enjoy, and there were serious problems regarding conditions on the plantations (Soluri, 2005). Salaries had risen only marginally, housing and health conditions were poor and the eight-hour work day (established by a 1949 labour law) was largely ignored. This situation was seized upon by reformists and radical militants committed to organising banana workers on the North Coast of Honduras (who had begun organising in the 1920s and 1930s), and in May 1954, following a dispute between UFCO dockworkers and the company, 25,000 UFCO workers, and another 15,000 at

Standard Fruit declared themselves on strike (Euraque, 1997, p.159). Over the next 69 days the situation escalated and the banana workers were joined by miners, brewers, tobacco and textile employees and many others across a broad section of Honduran social classes. Although there was little violence, the final cost to the fruit companies was in the millions. While the settlement itself was disappointing for the strikers, who ended the great banana strike in a state of exhaustion, it represented an important labour victory – as unions were now tacitly accepted as legal (Schulz & Schulz, 1994, p.23). This same labour movement, although controlled for many years by the AFL-CIO[22] working with the US State Department, was to become central to the formation of the Honduran resistance following the 2009 coup (Frank, 2010, p.9).

The banana companies in Central America have often been at the centre of debates between proponents of modernisation, and dependency theorists. While their presence in Honduras was encouraged by many as an essential infusion of capital and technology to ensure the development of Honduras, dependency theorists argued that this foreign dependency was undermining and under-developing the country (Soluri, 2005, p.4). Soluri notes that both sides share a key assumption that foreign capital held the power and locals were passive. He argues that this is not always the case; that local groups, such as unions, merchants and migrants, have been able to challenge and change their circumstances. Certainly the great banana strike can be seen as an example of this, although it also accelerated changes in the banana sector that were not worker friendly: the closure of farms, increasing mechanisation, lost jobs and the contracting out of production processes (Soluri, 2005, p.11). In that sense the dominance of foreign capital was reinforced.

Military Power

While the 1950s was a time of significant change in the relationship between capital and labour in Honduras, it was also a decade that marked a change in the relationship between the civilian president and the military. In 1956 the military ousted President Julio Lozano Días following fears he may try to maintain himself in power indefinitely. Although elections were held the following year, the coup had far-reaching consequences

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[22] AFL-CIO: The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations, a US American federation of unions.

as it established the autonomy of the armed forces in Honduras, and was the beginning of the military's climb as a dominant political force in Honduras (Schulz & Schulz, 1994, pp.25-27).

Following the return to civilian rule, the newly elected President Ramón Villeda Morales quickly pledged to undertake sweeping reforms, and indeed he soon obtained aid and loans from the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and US Government to help accelerate regional growth and industrialisation. He also began the process of agrarian reform, an important undertaking as land invasions and agrarian conflict was increasing over the encroachment of commercial farms and export agriculture (not only of the banana plantations but cotton plantations and cattle ranches in other parts of the country) into traditional agricultural areas. Villeda introduced an extensive agrarian reform law in 1962, which caused an uproar in the US Senate (who called for aid to be revoked unless the law was amended)[23], and caused UFCO to stop expansion in Honduras (leading to job losses). A new version of the law was worked out with UFCO negotiators, and eventually passed, but the episode "dramatically demonstrated the limits of change in the system that was emerging" (Schulz & Schulz, 1994, p.30).

The power the military continued to hold was illustrated in 1963 when Villeda's presidency was ended by another coup, as the military sought to maintain power and influence in the face of changes he had made, and the threat of the election of a radical, Modesto Rodas Alvarado, in the upcoming election. The new government, under Colonel Oswaldo López Arellano, quickly repressed labour and political movements, and formed close ties with the right wing Nationalist Party. In a "carefully orchestrated fraud" elections were held for a constituent assembly in early 1965, an assembly which elected Colonel López to the position of "constitutional president" for the next 6 years (Schulz & Schulz, 1994, p.33).

While the coup temporarily ended the process of political reform, economic modernisation continued through the 1960s. This was a time of a rapid increase in foreign (mostly U.S) penetration into Honduras, when one hundred per cent of the production of the 5 largest Honduran companies was controlled by US multinationals, the two largest

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[23] Although the law protected private land ownership Honduran oligarchs and US-dominated fruit companies (often with precarious land tenancies) felt threatened, hence the uproar in the US Senate (D. E. Schulz & D. S. Schulz, 1994, pp.29-30).

banks were under the control of US banks and US investments in Honduras totalled over $200 million (Schulz & Schulz, 1994, p.34).

As the 1960s rolled into the 1970s this modernisation continued against a background of military governments and political intrigue. Honduran unity and nationalism was stoked by the so-called "soccer war"[24] with El Salvador in 1969, but soon after internal tensions resurfaced. A brief restoration of democracy under a reformist national unity government was followed by the return of López Arellano and the military to power in 1972. Although previously allied with right wing landowners, López now effectively switched sides and instituted significant agrarian reform. However López could not escape his enemies, and weakened by his alleged involvement in a corruption scandal (nicknamed 'bananagate') he lost his position as head of state to Colonel Juan Alberto Melgar Castro. The new president inherited a tense situation, and was soon tested by the mobilisation of campesinos[25], culminating in a nationwide "hunger march" to Tegucigalpa which was marred by the killing of fourteen people.

In 1978 Melgar was overthrown and the conservative General Policarpo Paz García took power. From the outset Paz García promised to return Honduras to civilian rule, and in 1980 elections were held. However the winning Liberals were unable to form a government alone and the military retained significant controls (with Paz García as president) until presidential and congressional elections were held in 1981. In January 1982 Roberto Suazo Córdova was finally inaugurated as president of Honduras, ending close to a decade of military rule (Haggerty & Mille, 1993; Schulz & Schulz, 1994).

Since the end of military rule, Honduras has ostensibly had a multi-party democracy; although political power in the country continues to be dominated by two main parties, the Liberal and National Parties, both of which are right of centre (the National Party being further to the right than the Liberals). Both also continue to be dominated by caudillismo and corruption, and appear to be more interested in amassing political patronage than in offering effective programmes, and with emphasis on competition and power, rather than national problem solving (Haggerty & Mille, 1993).

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[24] The soccer war was a four day was fought between Honduras and neighbour El Salvador over land reform and immigration issues. Fighting broke out after intense rioting during the second North American qualifying round of the 1970 FIFA World Cup in which Honduras played El Salvador in Tegucigalpa, Honduras.
[25] Campesino is the Spanish term for peasants and rural workers.

Honduras, the US and the Contras

Despite the return to civilian rule, the military also continued to weld significant power during the 1980s, as the return to democracy coincided with a significant change in US policy towards Honduras. At the time the US was intent on destabilising the Sandinista government in Nicaragua, and as an ally of the US, economic and military aid poured into Honduras during the Nicaraguan war, transforming Honduras into a launching pad – a 'land-based aircraft carrier' for Contra attacks against Nicaragua, and a base for intelligence and other operations in El Salvador and Nicaragua (Schulz & Schulz, 1994; Skidmore & Smith, 2005). As Schulz and Schulz (1994, p.54) note, in keeping with their political culture and history, in the face of danger Honduras had found a foreign protector, a 'patrón', and opened themselves up even further to North American economic, political, military and cultural penetration. This process was aided by the economic conditions in the country which deteriorated through the 1980s. By the mid-1980s it was estimated (conservatively) that US companies controlled 60% of the Honduran economy (Ensor & Ensor, 2009, p.30).

By the end of the 1980s the Nicaraguan conflict drew to a close, and with it, US military aid to Honduras decreased. Military power waned as the military lost control of the police and the national telecommunications system, mandatory military service was abolished, and in 1999 landmark constitutional reform re-established civilian control over the military for the first time since the 1950s (Ruhl, 2010, p.96).

Throughout all this, during the final decades of the twentieth century, modernisation of the Honduran State continued, with law changes authorising the first free trade and industrial processing zones, and participation in Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) in the early 1980's which both provided a channel for military aid to Honduras and paved the way for the export manufacturing industry (Pine, 2008, p.139). This industry grew phenomenally during the 1990s, and the Honduran government invested considerable money into developing the physical infrastructure around the industrial processing zones (commonly known as maquilas or maquiladoras) and ports, although as Pine (2008, p.139) notes, "this development did not extend to the provision of adequate water, sewage, garbage and electricity services to the many thousands of poor people living on the outskirts of maquiladoras".

Hurricane Mitch and the Early 21st Century

In 1998 Honduran development suffered a major setback as Hurricane Mitch devastated the country. The hurricane was the fourth strongest storm in Atlantic Basin history, affecting all of Honduras' eighteen departments (provinces) with a combination of wind damage, flooding and devastating landslides in the de-forested interior (Ensor & Ensor, 2009). The damage was significant: 5657 people killed, more than 20,000 injured or missing and approximately $3.6 billion in damages including the loss of about 60% of the national infrastructure and 70% of agricultural output (Morris, 2002; Skidmore & Smith, 2005). In many regions one of every two households incurred medical, housing, or other costs due to Mitch, one in three suffered from a loss in crops, one in five lost assets and one in 10 lost wages or business income (Morris, 2002). This loss was most severe amongst the poorest of the poor, even in areas which were not among the most affected (Morris, 2002). Despite some initial claims that Honduras would be rebuilt by Hondurans, the recovery was largely led by international institutions and NGOs, a situation which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Alongside the rebuilding after Hurricane Mitch, the early 2000s were a time of skyrocketing crime rates and by 2008 Honduras had one of the highest homicide rates in the world. This crime rate was linked by many to youth gangs despite the heavy handed "Mano Dura" ("strong fist") policy of President Maduro which saw a return to military policing, broader powers given to police, and long sentences for gang members (Pine, 2008; Ruhl, 2010). Crime was also increasingly linked to drugs, as Honduras became part of an important shipping route for narcotics from Colombia bound for the USA.

The 2009 Coup

In 2005 Liberal Party candidate Manuel "Mel" Zelaya was elected President of Honduras. Unlike most previous Honduran presidents who tended to be urban businessmen, Zelaya was a rancher from the rural department of Olancho, a heritage he took pride in, evidenced by his usual attire of a white cowboy hat and boots (Ruhl, 2010, p.98). While he was elected on a conservative platform, Ruhl (2010, p.98) argues that his first year in office appeared incoherent, not following any clear ideological path, although he did sign

Honduras up to the neo-liberal CAFTA (Central America Free Trade Agreement)[26]. During his second year in office, however, Zelaya began to drift to the left. He bought more left-leaning Liberals into his cabinet, and singled out the nation's capitalist "oligarchy" as the cause of Honduras problems. He also took small steps towards resolving land disputes, and initiated economic measures designed to stabilise the cost of living and to improve incomes. In 2008 he joined the Venezuelan Petro-Caribe Program[27], and the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) alliance[28]. The private business sector welcomed the financial benefits of Petro-Caribe but fiercely opposed Honduras' entry into ALBA, which was formed by Venezuela's Hugo Chavez specifically to combat neo-liberal policies and the influence of the US in Latin America. Zelaya then further alienated the business sector and right wing politicians in 2009, by dismantling tax breaks for international businesses and by his refusal to grant new mining concessions (Legler, 2010; Pine & Vivar, 2010; Ruhl, 2010).

Despite these potentially populist moves in the second half of his presidential term, Zelaya's popularity rating dropped, he gained a reputation as impulsive and confrontational, an image not helped by his often hostile relationship with the Honduran media (Ruhl, 2010, p.98). There were accusations of corruption, particularly related to the state owned Hondutel (Honduran Communications Enterprise) (Ruhl, 2010). These allegations caused considerable damage to Zelaya's reputation. Recent evidence suggests that they were almost certainly part of a campaign by the countries ruling families and their media outlets to discredit and vilify the president (Main, 2010, p.17), and possibly driven by US business and political interests (Gollinger, 2009).

In the second half of his presidential term, rumours swirled around Honduras that Zelaya hoped to keep the Presidency for a second term, in spite of the fact that Zelaya had never officially announced he would seek re-election, and Honduras' strong constitutional ban on multiple terms (Cálix, 2010; Legler, 2010; Salomón, 2009). The ban on multiple terms

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[26] CAFTA is a free trade agreement between the US and the five Central American countries. It emphasizes market liberalisation for goods and services in Central America in return for access to the US market (Ensor, Ensor, Fuentes, & Barrios, 2009, p.192).

[27] Petro-Caribe is an oil alliance with Venezuela, offering oil to Latin American nations on preferential terms, with very low interest loans.

[28] ALBA is an alliance of Latin American countries promoting social, political, and economic integration. It was launched in 2004 by Venezuela and Cuba as an alternative to the Free Trade Area agreements proposed by the US.

can only be changed by a constituent assembly, and in late 2008 President Zelaya seemed to confirm the fears of many by beginning a campaign to call such an assembly (Ruhl, 2010) although his stated aim was simply for constitutional change.

In March 2009 Zelaya issued an executive decree ordering a non-binding referendum in order to ask Hondurans if they wished to add an extra ballot box (commonly called the "cuarta urna"[29]) to the general elections due to be held in November in order to find out whether the Honduran people wanted a constituent assembly (Ruhl, 2010; Salomón, 2009). The cuarta urna was strenuously opposed by many, and over the next three months the Attorney General, the National Congress, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) and the Supreme Court all declared the referendum illegal and unconstitutional. There was considerable legal and political manoeuvring during this time which is beyond the scope of this thesis, suffice to say that Zelaya refused to back down and ordered the military to continue with plans for the referendum (in Honduras the military customarily provides logistical and security assistance for elections). Tension grew as Zelaya's opponents joined forces to lobby the military to join a conspiracy to oust Zelaya. US Ambassador Hugo Llorens was also increasingly involved at this time, attempting to convince both parties to make a deal and avert a crisis – as a result the resistance would later claim he had fore-knowledge, and possibly even deeper involvement in the coup itself (Pine, 2010a).

The week before the referendum was to take place in June 2009, President Zelaya once again ordered the armed forces to assist with the vote. When the chief of Staff General Vásquez Velásquez refused, Zelaya fired him. The Supreme Court quickly reinstated the general but Zelaya refused to recognise him. The TSE then asked the police to confiscate the ballots and ballot boxes which were stored at the Air Force base in Tegucigalpa. On Thursday June 25 Zelaya responded by leading a crowd of several hundred supporters to the base to claim the boxes and ballots. In response the Supreme Court put out a warrant for the arrest of Zelaya on 18 charges including treason, and ordered General Vásquez to place the President under arrest (Legler, 2010; Ruhl, 2010).

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[29] There are usually three boxes in a Honduran presidential election, one for the President, one for the deputy and one for the mayor; hence the name "cuarta urna" or fourth box.

On Sunday morning, 28 June 2009, a military unit of about 150 soldiers arrested Zelaya and put him on a plane to Costa Rica (allegedly in his pyjamas). The referendum was cancelled. A fake resignation letter was circulated, and the head of Congress Roberto Micheletti was quickly confirmed as interim president.

While a popularly elected leader had clearly been illegally deposed, this coup appeared to be somewhat different to previous Latin American coups, a situation that was to be exploited by the coup regime in the months following the coup. The court order from the Supreme Court, the quick hand-over of power from the military to Congress and the succession of Micheletti (who was the constitutional successor to Zelaya) were key factors that differentiated the 2009 coup (Ruhl, 2010), and which became part of the "constitutional succession" or "non-coup" discourse that will be discussed in Chapter 10.

Despite the internal questions surrounding the legality of Zelaya's ouster, the coup was widely condemned by the international community. The Organisation of American States (OAS) quickly issued an ultimatum – to restore democracy and Zelaya within 72 hours or face suspension. Accordingly, Honduras was suspended from the OAS after the 72 hours was up (Legler, 2010, p.14). Most Latin American governments, the CA-4 (Central American four nations), ALBA, the UN and the EU all followed the OAS in condemning the coup and calling for the return of Zelaya (Legler, 2010, p.14).

In contrast to this international consensus, throughout the crisis the United States appeared to waver (Main, 2010; Ruhl, 2010). While US President Barack Obama initially condemned the removal of Zelaya, he chose not to recall the US ambassador, Hugo Llorens, and appeared reluctant to name the events a military coup – a step which would have meant the implementation of formal trade sanctions (Cassel, 2009). Even so, the US consistently refused to recognise representatives of Micheletti's government, eventually revoking the visas of a number of high ranking members of the government, and adopting incremental sanctions that led to the suspension of all humanitarian and military aid (Legler, 2010, p.15). The United States also put its weight behind negotiations led by Oscar Arias, President of Costa Rica. Arias presided over three rounds of negotiations in San José, which finally resulted in the tentative agreement of the San José Accords; although the agreements were made by negotiating agents and in the end Zelaya and Micheletti both refused to sign.

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Main (2010) argues that the US position on the coup was a clear reflection of its foreign policy in the region. Zelaya was unlikely to have been considered a threat by Washington, but his alliance with Chavez (leader of the so-called "bad left"[30] in Latin America) meant that the US had little incentive to encourage his restoration once it had been overthrown. Certainly there is support for the idea that international efforts to defend democracy in Honduras were hurt by the US geopolitical objectives in the region (Cálix, 2010).

In the weeks after the coup Zelaya attempted to return to Honduras three times. The first two (entry by air, and by land from Nicaragua) were unsuccessful but in September he was able to secretly enter the country, taking refuge in the Brazilian Embassy. His entry prompted further crackdowns by the government and military and the entire country was put under curfew. While Zelaya was holed up in the Embassy, the OAS sponsored another round of negotiations in Tegucigalpa, which resulted in the Guaymuras Accord, an agreement which endorsed the provisions of the San José Accord and added the formation of a national unity government and the return of Zelaya; but which was subject to the approval of the Honduran National Congress (Legler, 2010, p.17). However the accord was vague and subject to exploitation by Micheletti's government, who were able to form a national unity government without Zelaya (who for his part refused to nominate candidates). The Accord finally unravelled when US assistant Secretary of State Thomas Shannon shocked Zelaya supporters by announcing that the US would recognise the November elections even if Zelaya was not returned to office (Ruhl, 2010, p.103). The Honduran government then postponed its decision about Zelaya's return until after the elections, at which time they voted 111 to 14 against his return.

In November, despite Zelaya's calls for a boycott, and threats of international non-recognition, the previously scheduled presidential elections went ahead with few international observers – notably none from the OAS, and most from business and conservative groups (Cálix, 2010). The elections were won by National Party candidate Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo Sosa, who gained 57 per cent of the presidential vote. The elections were not without controversy, with the electoral commission's initial estimate of a 62 per cent voter turnout later amended to a more realistic 49.9 per cent, and with reports of vote

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[30] There is a prevailing belief in Washington policy circles that recent left wing governments in Latin America fall into two camps, the moderate "good left" (such as Brazil and Uruguay) and the populist and authoritarian "bad left" (including Venezuela, Cuba, Ecuador and Bolivia). The good left is viewed as acceptable, while the bad left is labelled "toxic and highly infectious". Under this belief, Zelaya was considered "toxic" (Main, 2010).

buying in poor areas and intimidation by employers (Cálix, 2010; Ruhl, 2010). On 27 January, 2010 Lobo was sworn in as president.

Reactions to the coup and the implications for projecthonduras will be discussed further in Chapter 10. At this point it should be noted that, once again, the hand of the United States was implicated. While the coup appears to have been orchestrated internally, there is a strong belief amongst many Hondurans and outside observers that the US had a significant role to play in the events of 2009. In the light of the history of the US in Latin America, this is not difficult to imagine. As the discussion in this chapter has shown, the United States holds a particularly powerful position in Latin American history and while it may not wield that power so openly in the twenty-first century, Latin Americans are still very aware of it. Latin American novelist Carlos Fuentes (1999, p.325) articulates the Latin perception of the US this way:

> *Our perception of the United States has been that of a democracy inside and an empire outside: Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. We have admired democracy; we have deplored empire. And we have suffered the actions of this country, which has constantly intervened in our lives in the name of manifest destiny, the big stick, dollar diplomacy, and cultural arrogance.*

Hondurans are well used to seeing the US and US interests take a leading role in their politics as well as economy. As Soluri (2005, p.217) argues, only the most 'ardent apologist' can relegate the activities of the US banana companies in Honduras to a distant past that has no bearing on the present. The power and influence of the US is still clearly evident in Honduras as Colburn (2002, p.100) indicates in his description of the role of the "gringo"[31] in Latin American society:

> *When not just a slovenly tourist, el gringo plays the role of the expert, the conduit for the transmittal of technology, of arcane but useful knowledge, of the cultural avant-garde, of spiritual redemption and of the other wonders of the United States (and Canada). El gringo brings earthmoving equipment, agrochemicals, instructions on how to run a McDonald's franchise, advice on how to run an election campaign, music television, skills to repair a Boeing aircraft, gold mining*

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[31] "Gringo" is a common nickname for US Americans, often extended to all foreigners of North American or European origin.

equipment, aid in combating international trade in narcotics, pharmaceuticals,
recommendations on how to privatise State enterprises, help in becoming a
Mormon… the list is seemingly endless. The influence of the United States is
considerable and pervasive. With the passage of time, the influence of the United
States is, perhaps, less heavy-handed, but if anything it is more ubiquitous,
creeping not just into politics and finance but into every nook and cranny of life in
the region.

In the context it is hardly surprising that Hondurans see the hand of the United States behind the 2009 coup. US American intervention is not only consistent with the history of Honduras, it is a contemporary reality. The remainder of this chapter will explore this relationship between Honduras and the United States more closely, within the particular context of Honduran development in the twenty-first century. This will then enable the placement of projecthonduras within Honduran history, politics and development.

Development in Honduras

The interventions of the United States, the dominance of right wing agendas in Honduran political history, and the increasing integration of Honduras into the global economy have left a clear mark on the nature of Honduran development in the twenty-first century. Under successive right wing governments and as a recipient of significant aid, Honduras since the 1980s has undergone structural adjustment programmes and market liberalisation linked to loan repayments (Pine, 2008, p.19). These intensive programmes have reduced the role of the state in defining the pathways of development and have decreased governmental expenditure on social welfare programmes, subsidies for basic grains, and provision of agricultural and forestry extension services (Nygren & Myatt-Hirvonen, 2009, p.830).

This pathway has been reinforced since Honduras' approval to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative in 2001. Since then the Honduran government has implemented specific poverty reduction strategies as a condition of external debt relief in order to create an 'enabling environment' to help the rural poor to build up 'their own pathways out of poverty' (Nygren & Myatt-Hirvonen, 2009, p.830). This has involved considerable emphasis on market-based mechanisms of poverty reduction (Government

of Honduras, 2001). The outcomes of these programmes have, however, been questionable. While they have produced reasonable growth in GDP per capita, few benefits have trickled down to the lower class majority (Ruhl, 2010, p.96).

Cuesta (2007) argues that these programmes have been largely ineffective in reducing poverty in Honduras due to their concentration on infrastructure investments and trade liberalisation, strategies which favour rich farmers and large landowners over small scale agriculture and do not promote the more fair distribution of the costs and benefits involved in market-based mechanisms of economic development (Nygren & Myatt-Hirvonen, 2009). While Cuesta's critique of the HIPC and PRSP process contends that the strategy was a failed opportunity, other critics are harsher. Pine, for example, argues that the strategy, as part of a wider neo-liberal agenda, is in fact part of the process that maintains Hondurans in poverty, giving primacy to 'the fiscal bottom line' rather than the health and welfare of the Honduran people (Pine, 2008, p.20). Certainly there has been only a minor increase in Honduras' HDI level since 2000, from 0.525 in 2000, to 0.604 in 2010 (UNDP, 2010). Boyer (2010) also notes that Honduras no longer fulfils its traditional role as the food larder for the isthmus as imports of basic foods – maize, beans, rice, and sorghum – have risen steadily with liberalising markets, the per capita land area producing these four basic foods has steadily declined, a process that has been accelerated with Honduras' incorporation into CAFTA.

As discussed previously, the government of Manual Zelaya took some steps away from this right wing development path. Although his actions were enough to lead to his ousting, they did not substantially change the direction of the country (which remained within CAFTA for the duration of Zelaya's presidency), and since the coup and the subsequent election of President Lobo the country has continued with a neo-liberal development policy.

Because of the neo-liberal development trajectory, export agriculture remains an important part of the Honduran economy; however this policy environment has given rise to two significant new trends in Honduran development. The first, the rise of export oriented manufacturing, has been strongly encouraged by the government and development experts. The other, a huge growth in emigration, is not looked on so favourably but is arguably a consequence of neo-liberal development. Income from

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manufacturing and remittances from emigrants now contribute a substantial proportion of Honduran GDP (Ruhl, 2010).

The export oriented manufacturing industry has been encouraged by successive governments and development agencies (as will be discussed further below). This industry is concentrated on the North Coast, and is largely owned by foreigners (most significantly US and Korean corporations) or local elites (usually contracted to foreign corporations). Maquila production has now overtaken the fruit industry; accounting for 69% of the country's total exports to the US in 2004, and Honduras is now one of the largest garment exporters to the US. This growth continues to be controversial as the maquilas compete with local companies for labour, because profits mostly go offshore and because of poor labour rights records (Ensor, Ensor, Fuentes, & Barrios, 2009; Ver Beek, 2001).

While the growth of maquilas is encouraged, the second trend of growth in emigration is usually frowned on. Most emigrants are young Hondurans who move north to find work (usually illegally) in the US. This may be discouraged but the remittances they send back to Honduras now form a significant source of income for many Honduran families, and contributes about 21% of the Honduran GDP (Ensor et al., 2009; Nygren & Myatt-Hirvonen, 2009).

While many internal factors fuel these trends, they are also the result of external interventions. As previously discussed, the United States has taken a much less overt role in Honduras over recent decades, but as Colburn (2002) noted, the influence of the United States and Western culture is creeping into every nook and cranny of Honduras. In the twenty-first century this influence often comes via a relatively new player, the development industry.

The Development Industry

> *I found them to be a close knit community; an international clique of sorts concentrated in little pockets around Tegucigalpa, with tendrils extending beyond the capital to every region of the country. Made up of expatriates and their Honduran colleagues, this development crowd is prominent on the Honduran social scene. They hobnob with the President and his ministers; they consult with*

elite bankers and entrepreneurs from Honduras and abroad. Their faces often appear as part of front page news. Making things happen at the highest level, the globalizers are the real movers and shakers in the country. But they can also be found in the humblest areas of Honduran society. They work alongside community leaders in the poorest urban slums and in the most rural areas. In other words, it is not hard to find development workers in Honduras. (Jackson, 2007, pp.62-63)

This quote from the book "*The Globalizers*"[32] by Jeffrey Jackson cleverly articulates the pervasive role of development workers in Honduras. As noted earlier in this chapter, the international financial institutions and bilateral aid agencies entered Honduras from the 1950s. These institutions have grown significantly in size and power since then, and there has been a concomitant rise in non-governmental development aid. As Jackson indicates in the quote above, development workers can now be found all over Honduras, working in a variety of contexts and organisations. They disperse millions of dollars of aid money each year. Table 3 outlines different types of aid sources and the key institutions and organisations of each type in Honduras. This remainder of this chapter will explore these aid sources in more depth, the influence they have and their role in the development of Honduras.

Whilst there is clearly significant overlap between these groups in Table 3 (particularly between the various non-governmental agencies) this table simplifies what is otherwise a confusing plethora of organisations and acronyms. It also helps to illustrate what Jackson (2007, pp.33-35) calls the hierarchy of development organisations in Honduras.

This hierarchy relates to the power and wealth of the development organisations, and their ability to carry out development projects as well as to influence local policy making. At the top of this hierarchy are USAID and the IDB (Inter-American Development Bank), respectively the largest bilateral and multilateral donors operating in Honduras. The second tier consists the other most significant ODA donors, with JICA (the Japanese government agency) and GTZ (Germany), the World Bank and the UN being the largest in this group. These top two tiers are the most influential politically.

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[32] The Globalizers is an ethnography of the development industry in Honduras and is one of the only studies of aid and development workers in Honduras. It is quoted extensively in this section of the thesis as it provides a good overview of the development industry and the role of development workers in the Honduran context.

Table 3: The Honduran Development Sector

Type of Development Organisations		Description	Examples of organisations in Honduras[33]
Official Development Assistance (ODA)	Bilateral	Government to government agencies	USAID JICA (Japan) GTZ (Germany) AECI (Spain) CIDA (Canada)
	Multilateral	Aid delivered through official international organisations	IDB IMF World Bank UN Agencies CABEI EU PAHO OAS
Non-Governmental	International NGOs	Non-governmental organisations based outside of Honduras	CARE CRS World Vision Oxfam Habitat for Humanity Save the Children
	Religious institutions[34]	Churches and other religious institutions[35]	Catholic church Mainline Protestant churches Evangelical churches
	Honduran Civil Society	Honduran NGOs and indigenous development organisations	CODEH[36] ASONOG[37] FOPRIDEH
	Volunteers & Volunteer Orgs	Very small NGOs and charitable groups, expatriate volunteers and missionaries	

(Based on data from Jackson, 2007)

The largest of the INGOs, along with most other bilateral development organisations, comprise the third tier of the hierarchy, and includes CARE, CRS (Catholic Relief Services) and World Vision (Jackson, 2007, p.35). These may not have the political power of the organisations on higher tiers, but they carry out large and expensive projects across

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[33] For a more complete list of multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental organisations see Jackson, 2007.

[34] The religious institution category has clear overlaps with INGOs, Honduran civil society and the volunteers, many of whom have a religious base; however the churches themselves play a very significant role in the Honduran development sector and therefore warrant their inclusion as a separate category here.

[35] While other religions (including Islam and Judaism) are present and active in Honduras they remain very small, and their influence in the development industry is correspondingly negligible.

[36] CODEH is the Comisionado de Derechos Humanos de Honduras, the Honduran Human Rights Commission.

[37] ASONOG and FOPRIDEH are umbrella organisations representing a wide range of local Honduran development organisations.

the country, and they are part of the process of carrying out policies at programmes at a national level.

The fourth tier consists of the smallest bilateral, and the hundreds of local and international NGOs and private voluntary organisations that undertake development work in Honduras. Many of these are involved in the delivery of services that the Honduran government might otherwise provide. This is the level at which most organisations in projecthonduras appear to operate.

Jackson (2007, p.39) argues that the relative power and influence of the development organisations in Honduras is illustrated by the institutional geography which reveals not only the differences between the agencies but a tremendous wealth disparity between foreign development agencies and Honduran government institutions. In particular he notes the location and condition of offices within the newer business district of Tegucigalpa, and the equipment and vehicles used. Honduran government agencies typically, for example, utilise used vehicles and equipment donated by the agencies, often with the logo of the donating agency visible underneath the over painted logo of the Honduran government.

While power and influence are clearly not confined to outside organisations, and do not travel evenly down the table, it is clear that most power resides at the top, with the largest ODA organisations, and it decreases at lower levels. This power distribution is significant in the analysis of the politics of projecthonduras, and will be returned to later in this thesis.

Also significant, in light of the diversity of the projecthonduras network (discussed in Chapter 8), is the exclusion of various groups from Jackson's analysis. This includes the church (which arguably holds considerable power in Honduras), and Christian mission groups, entrepreneurs and the military, whom he does not identify as 'globalisers' as they have a different agenda, being employed by organisations advancing the beliefs and practices of their members rather than the globe as a whole or (as in the case of social entrepreneurs) to make a profit[38]. These groups will also be discussed later in this chapter,

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[38] The term 'globaliser' was defined in Chapter 2: it refers to development professionals whose role it is to create the conditions necessary for a nation's integration into the global market.

while the next sections will outline in more detail the agencies in Jackson's top tiers, ODA agencies and INGOs, and their role in Honduran development.

Official development assistance

Since the 1950s Honduras has been the recipient of significant amounts of Official Development Assistance (ODA), money given as grants or low interest loans to developing countries by multilateral and bilateral agencies. This aid totalled $564,330,000 in 2008, equivalent to about 7% of Honduras' GDP (World Bank, 2010). Most ODA to Honduras is spent on programmes and projects that are designed and managed by the agencies themselves, or to existing Honduran government institutions where it constitutes a significant proportion of the national government revenue, although some is distributed through local and international NGOs (Jackson, 2007, pp.28-29).

ODA organisations are also used to channel disaster aid, for example, and ODA aid to Honduras peaked in the year following hurricane Mitch, when ODA increased to US$316 million dollars in 1998 and then climbed dramatically to US$816 million dollars in 1999. The US Department of Defence alone delivered nearly 1000 tonnes of food, over 52 tonnes of medicine, 350,000 litres of water, and over 25 tonnes of other supplies in the first 30 days after the storm (Morris, 2003).

ODA organisations are represented at all levels of Jackson's development hierarchy but are particularly prominent at the higher levels, and wield a significant amount of power in Honduras. At the top of the development hierarchy, USAID has considerable influence over government policy and direction. This was already obvious during the Contra era in the 1980s, a time when US economic policies had become overtly neo-liberal, and this was reflected in aid programmes. It was also evident in the 1980s when a key USAID's strategy was land privatisation, facilitated by a now infamous land-titling programme. Publicised as increasing tenure security and credit worthiness for farms within and outside the reform sector, this programme allegedly became the first step in a ploy to sell off agrarian reform lands to the highest bidder (Boyer, 2010, p.324). This ability of USAID to influence policy arguably became stronger in the 1990s when structural adjustment programmes were in full swing. For example Jackson (2007, pp.50-51) recounts the pride of a USAID staffer at the agency's role in the passing of the 1992 Agriculture

Modernisation and Development Law which ended import tariffs and price controls and opened up Honduras to the world market. As noted previously, these measures were highly criticised for their impact on the poor, an impact that the World Bank, IMF and IDB were aware of and concerned about, giving structural adjustment mitigation loans' to fund health, sanitation and education projects for the poorest (Jackson, 2007, p.29).

Jackson argues that the role of the ODA organisations as globalisers and their goal to extend Honduran integration into the global system was made particularly clear in the months following hurricane Mitch. Not only was most of the clean-up done with foreign aid, the priorities identified in damage reports written by international agencies quickly became official government policy for reconstruction (Jackson, 2007, p.299). Pine (2008, p.140) argues that the ability of ODA organisations to play such a significant role in formulating Honduran politics is based on its external debt, created through colonial and post-colonial control of the country's resources. By tying aid to the implementation of specific policies, the ODA agencies are able to direct the macro development of Honduras in the ways they wanted. Even debt relief measures, such as the HIPC initiative are tied to further market-oriented change. In 2001, in order to secure HIPC status and the associated debt relief, the Honduran government, under the direct guidance of the World Bank and IMF, produced a PRSP (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper) which outlined the measures they were going to take to reduce poverty. The PRSP, while ostensibly about poverty reduction, prioritised the acceleration of equitable and sustainable growth and took a liberal economic approach to poverty reduction that differed little from previous structural adjustment policies (Ensor, Ensor, Fuentes, & Barrios, 2009, pp.187-188).

While the most powerful of the ODA organisations in Honduras clearly promote a strongly neo-liberal development path for Honduras, it is important to note that this is not the view held by all development agencies, many of which have somewhat conflicting agendas. As Jackson (2007, pp.54-55) notes, attempts to promote purely neo-liberal agendas are not always without conflict. However the neo-liberal development path, supported by the most powerful of the ODA organisations, is undoubtedly dominant.

Non-government organisations

The other large player in the development arena in Honduras is non-governmental development aid, much of which comes through International NGOs (INGOs). This private, nonofficial aid is not monitored or tracked officially and there is little information about the amount or origin of the money, nor is there any accurate count of the current number of INGOs in Honduras, which is estimated to be in the hundreds (Jackson, 2007, p.31). It is, however, clear that the number of development NGOs in Honduras has risen alongside the rise in ODA and, as highlighted in Chapter 2, is consistent with the worldwide increase in NGOs assuming responsibility for the provision of social and development services growth under neo-liberal governments (Hefferan et al., 2009, p.2).

As with the ODA sector, the NGO sector in Honduras grew most rapidly following Hurricane Mitch. While there was a peak in ODA aid at this time, the government prioritised this towards infrastructural projects for agribusiness and industry and allocated 'human development' to local government, NGOs and the international community (Boyer & Pell, 1999). As a result grassroots level relief for the disaster victims was most often provided by churches and non-governmental organisations, consisting mainly of food, clothing, and medicine (Morris, 2002)[39]. Because of the unprecedented level of NGO involvement, and the huge needs, Hurricane Mitch also catalysed the movement of NGOs in Honduras from these traditional roles, what Korten (1990) terms first generation or relief strategies, into third or fourth generation policy and advocacy roles. It became a significant opportunity for civil society groups to organise (Bradshaw, Linneker, & Zuniga, 2002; Ensor et al., 2009), and lead by Caritas (the Catholic relief and social service agency), several civil society groups – including many Honduran organisations - formed INTERFOROS, a broad-based coalition to help the reconstruction effort (V. Fuentes, 2009, p.111). From the beginning INTERFOROS had a political voice which has since extended beyond the hurricane clean-up, it was even able to secure some

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[39] It is interesting to note that while the NGO community in Honduras grew significantly following Mitch not all offers of help were unreservedly accepted, and that the Hondurans did in fact retain significant power. This was clear in the case of one European Organisation which had planned to send a donation of medication along with a delegation of doctors to manage its distribution. The offer was declined by Honduran officials who reasoned that the positive impact of foreign doctors was severely limited by their lack of familiarity with common tropical ailments and the local medical system, and that the level of support they would need (translators, nurses, guides, tourist-style accommodation and food) would outweigh any positive contribution they could make (Swanson, 2000).

flexibility in the conditions attached to the HIPC initiative (Bradshaw, Linneker, & Zuniga, 2002, p.257).

The founding of INTERFOROS was an important point in the history of NGOs in Honduras, not the least because it involved both international and local Honduran NGOs. In general, alongside the INGOs, Honduran civil society groups have been strengthened during the post-Mitch era (Ensor, Ensor, Fuentes, & Barrios, 2009, p.205). Honduras has a lively and vibrant indigenous civil society, which often gets overlooked in the development literature[40], although Jackson does infer that many of these groups are also globalisers through the networking and policy work of FOPRIDEH and ASONOG, and through their partnerships with ODA organisations and INGOs. Data from the projecthonduras research indicates that in fact most Honduran NGOs do work closely with external funders, and are vital to the implementation of external programmes and projects at the community level.

Honduras also has a number of NGOs and civil society groups who are not directly involved in development work, but work in environmental or social advocacy. Many of these are highly political, and have been active in the post-coup resistance, a stance which sets them apart from the development-oriented groups (both international and Honduran) who maintained a non-political position.

The Churches

The influence of ODA and NGOs on Honduran development is undeniable; however limiting the discussion to these organisations would side-line one of the most powerful actors in Honduran development, the Churches; both the long history of the Catholic Church and the more recent arrival of the Evangelical churches. These churches have played, and continue to play a particularly important role in development in Honduras, both at national and community level.

Honduras is a predominantly Catholic nation and although the relationship between church and state has never been as strong in Honduran society as elsewhere in Latin

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[40] Indeed it could be argued that most development work in countries like Honduras is carried out by local people in local organisations; however there is little research on indigenous or local development in Honduras. Unfortunately, this study contributes to that imbalance as the organisations participating in the study are largely expatriate. This was not a deliberate decision; rather it was an outcome of my decision to focus on the projecthonduras network which, as later Chapters show, has struggled to recruit Hondurans.

America there has been much change over recent decades and the Catholic Church continues to have a very strong influence on Honduran society. The Honduran constitution maintains a strict separation between church and state, and as a result during the 1960s the Catholic Church in Honduras was able to become particularly progressive, particularly in rural areas where it supported campesinos during land seizures and redistribution, and formed several explicitly political organisations in the countryside (Shepherd, 1993). Shepherd argues that this progressive agenda was influenced by the perception that pressure in rural areas could result in positive change at the state level, and because of the access to resources they had through a large number of expatriate clergy – about 80% at the time (p.288). However, from the mid-1970s, in the face of increasing state opposition, the church shifted away from this progressive position and, in theory at least, became increasingly depoliticised. The church hierarchy continues to maintain this position, although they allied themselves with the anti-Zelaya/pro-coup position following the ouster of President Manual Zelaya in 2009. However while the Catholic Church hierarchy has maintained varying political positions and are currently relatively conservative, individual churches and priests, particularly those in rural areas, are often progressive. Many were very vocal against the hierarchy following the coup.

The Catholic Church has also continued to play a considerable role in development and relief services at the community level, both through Catholic development agencies such as Caritas and CRS, and through various programmes at the parish level. The leading role of the church and church-based religious organisations in relief and development is well recognised, as evidenced after Mitch when President Carlos Flores gave the task of receiving, managing and distributing much of the foreign assistance to both Catholic and Evangelical churches (the Catholic Churches as the largest assumed the bulk of the responsibility) (Fuentes, 2009, p.106).

While the majority of Hondurans are Catholic and the Catholic Church continues to hold considerable power, their religious dominance has been challenged in recent years by the rapid growth of Protestant, particularly evangelical, churches. Although the exact number of Protestants and evangelicals in Honduras is unknown, the evangelical church in Honduras is estimated to have sextupled between 1960 and 1990 (Stoll, 1991, p.9).

Evangelical churches have often been associated with politically conservative ideologies (Hoksbergen & Madrid, 1997; Sherman, 2008), and Honduras is no exception. For example, the number of evangelical missionaries in Honduras rose during the mid-1980s after the US government cut off aid to the contras. Encouraged by Col. Oliver North in Washington, several evangelical groups began coming and going through the sensitive and restricted border zones between Honduras and Nicaragua, taking aid to refugees and ministering to the contras (Stoll, 1991, pp.325-326). The presence of evangelicals on the US Honduran border, and their involvement in the refugee camps is confirmed by my Honduran husband, who grew up in the area and lived with evangelical missionaries for a period in the late 1980s, often accompanying relief groups and journalists to the refugee camps and the front lines of the conflict. This bias towards right wing agendas was also evident following the coup in 2009, when many evangelical leaders were vocal supporters of the coup (Frank, 2010, p.8).

However, while church leaders and external agencies may at times play an overt political role, for the most part, evangelical churches are not actively involved in political activities, partly because they are small players working with the poor and marginalised peoples of society, and partly related to the fact that about 75 per cent of evangelical churches in Honduras are Pentecostal, and therefore emphasise the salvation of souls rather than active political or social work (Baker & Wagner, 2004, p.99; Hoksbergen & Madrid, 1997). There is also a strong belief within the Honduran evangelical church that poverty and suffering (particularly related to disasters such as hurricane Mitch) are punishments from God (Baker & Wagner, 2004, p.99).

Because of this belief system few Pentecostals work in the NGO sector, so most NGO leadership is comprised of socially conscious Protestants, often from mainline denominations, with representatives from radical, conservative, and moderate groups, and many are expatriate in origin and leadership. These NGOs are prominent in rural development, health, housing, community development, education, small-business promotion, enterprise development, leadership development, literacy, and child welfare. Hoksbergen and Madrid also note that they tend to work in different regions and do not seem to interact much with each other (1997, p.45).

These Protestant NGOs in Honduras are not usually overtly political, and as Hoksbergen and Madrid (1997, p.47) note many believe that neo-liberal economic policies seriously harm the poor, the very people they are trying to help. Despite this Hoksbergen and Madrid found that many were in agreement with the overall philosophy of neo-liberalism (though not necessarily with structural adjustment), believing that free markets and competition are good bases for economic development and that it is important to foster individual entrepreneurship. They argue that in many instances evangelical missions and programmes consciously work to develop traits such as individual initiative and an enterprising spirit that are congruent with neo-liberal development, finding that:

> *…in their work with the poorest of the poor, NGOs provide privately owned housing at low rates of payment; they teach basic literacy, sound health practices, and improved agricultural techniques; they help people develop marketable skills; they supply the poor with raw materials and capital equipment. In the process, these NGOs have been working at developing a sense of responsibility and ownership among the poor by encouraging the people's involvement, engagement, and active participation, all of which are central to the development of neo-liberal society. (Hoksbergen & Madrid, 1997, p.48)*

This aligns with Jackson's (2007, p.3) description of a globaliser, at least at the community level, as those who work to create the conditions necessary for market-led globalisation, although Jackson only includes only those religious organisations that operate purely as development agencies, and explicitly excludes missionaries whose primary task is to proselytise (p.315). However even Jackson's own description of missionary groups he observed draws attention to the idea that their presence may have globalising consequences:

> *On my most recent trip to Honduras, there were three different evangelical missions on the plane. Each consisted of ten to twenty people wearing matching t-shirts emblazoned with colourful logos and hip motifs. Although missionaries have been travelling around the globe for hundreds of years, the suburban, middle class, MTV fashion sense of these predominantly teenage travellers (along with their ubiquitous digital cameras and MP3 players) was entirely twenty-first century. From their Tommy Hilfiger jeans to their hundred-dollar Oakley sunglasses, these Christian evangelical teens were heavily laden with the same*

products of mass consumer culture as adorns the tourists… I began to wonder whether such groups promote this consumer culture as much as they promote evangelical Protestantism…I ponder the implications of such an encounter. What would the rural villagers think of the large group of American teenagers and their designer clothes and digital cameras…" (Jackson, 2007, p.58).

Clearly there is a significant difference between these mission teams and the local Honduran churches they visit, both in a material sense but also in their respective roles in Honduran development. While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to look more deeply into the work of the churches in Honduras, these mission teams are also part of a wider phenomenon of tourist volunteers that forms a substantial part of this study.

Volunteerism in Honduras

Missionaries and religious NGOs form a significant part of a growing phenomenon in Honduras and other parts of the world, one that was discussed in Chapter 2: the extraordinary rise of international volunteers in development (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; Lewis, 2005). While the exact number of international volunteers in Honduras is not known, the popularity of Honduras as a destination for volunteers is evident in a study by Callanan and Thomas (2005) of volunteer projects in the tourism context, which ranked destinations offering projects or programmes for volunteer tourists. In this study, Honduras was ranked fifth of 153 countries by the number of volunteer projects. These volunteers and projects can be grouped into two main categories – long term volunteers (often missionaries, or directors and staff of very small NGOs) and short term volunteers, often called volunteer tourists. These are the volunteers and volunteer organisations of the last line of Table 3.

Small organisations, long term volunteers

Long term volunteers in Honduras are usually found in small organisations and missions, of which, as previously noted, there are hundreds. While the focus of Jackson's (2007) study of the globalisers was the large community of development professionals in Honduras, in the process of writing about these he also alludes to the hundreds of smaller NGOs and private voluntary organisations undertaking development work, testament perhaps to the sheer number and ubiquity of these organisations. These are part of the

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fourth tier of his development hierarchy, small organisations who perform an important role in the delivery of services (p.35).

Despite their small size, relative powerlessness and their absence in much of the development literature, these small organisations have a long term and lasting presence in many Honduran communities. In the course of this research I encountered many of these organisations, and the dedicated, long term and usually volunteer staff and directors that run them. Many arrived in the aftermath of Hurricane Mitch, although some have been in Honduras for decades. They operate schools, clinics and small development projects in one or two communities; or may simply provide on-going support (school supplies, medical equipment etc.) for existing community facilities and organisations. They are often founded by expatriates who had previously visited Honduras as tourists or as short term volunteers, or who had moved to Honduras for other reasons, and who want to contribute to development in Honduras in a long term way. Their funding usually comes from private donations. There is clearly some overlap with missionary and church-based groups, and the international NGOs discussed earlier in this chapter – indeed many would fit the description of an international NGO and many run projects in partnership with the INGOs – but they exist largely outside the professional networks of INGOs and the Honduran development literature.

Volunteer tourism

Also overlapping the INGOs and churches is the phenomenon of volunteer tourism. Volunteer tourism spans a wide range of activities and modes of work, including social, environmental and religious work. It includes individuals who travel to work for a short time with a NGO or church, and also groups of volunteers travelling together to work together, usually for about 1-3 weeks. As noted by Jackson (2007, p.58) in the quote above regarding mission teams, travelling around Honduras it is easy to spot these groups of Westerners in airports, hotels, restaurants and tourist sites, many with matching t-shirts and flashy equipment. Some are simply Christian mission teams, but most are involved in some form of volunteer labour – medical brigades, construction work and environmental work being among some of the most common.

While there are no accurate statistics available of the numbers of volunteer tourists arriving in Honduras, Marco has estimated that approximately 100,000 "social tourists"[41] visit Honduras each year, contributing about a quarter of the national tourism revenue (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2006a). Because of the volume of social tourists arriving, there is a significant infrastructure in Honduras aimed at providing for their needs. Evidence of this can also be found in the advertising material of many hotels and tourist-oriented businesses, which offer services directed towards medical brigades and other social tourists.

Marco writes glowingly of the potential of these volunteers, seeing them as a primary means of bringing positive change to Honduras, however at this point their particular role in Honduran development is not well documented or understood. As noted in Chapter 2, while short term volunteer work is growing in popularity the role of these short term volunteer tourists is widely disputed in the literature. While much literature surrounding is explicitly positive (Devereux, 2008; Lewis, 2005; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007), volunteerism has also been associated with promoting an 'us' and 'them' mind-set (Raymond & C. M. Hall, 2008; Simpson, 2004), undermining the dignity of communities with hand-outs (McGehee & Andereck, 2008; McLennan, 2005) and promoting modernisation, or development as Westernisation (Roberts, 2004, p.15; Simpson, 2004, p.685).

Within the Honduran development community there is also considerable criticism, volunteer tourism initiatives have been accused of being an inefficient use of resources, of being culturally and socially inappropriate, and of leading to increased dependency in Honduran communities (see for example Guttentag, 2009; McLennan, 2005; Ver Beek, 2006). It is also a far more volatile form of aid, subject to changes in the global economy and tourist industry. For example the number of volunteers arriving in Honduras dropped dramatically following the coup in 2009, as sponsoring organisations could not assure their safety and security and the volunteers themselves lost confidence. Despite this volunteers and volunteer organisations remain an important source of development aid for Honduran communities, and their presence in Honduras continued to be

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[41] "Social Tourist" is the term used within the projecthonduras network to refer to short term, volunteer tourists.

encouraged – as this post by a long-time projecthonduras supporter on the *Honduras Weekly* website indicates:

> *The Honduran economy, battered by inflation, unemployment, underemployment, poor education, growing poverty, diminishing exports, and a bankrupt government left by the previous administration needs all the help it can to get back on its feet. Any arguments that Honduras is not yet ready in this "post Mel" period to receive aid groups should be disregarded as nothing more than urban myth.*
>
> *Honduras is 100 percent open, and it needs every church mission, medical brigade, and student volunteer team that is interested in visiting the country to help its people. In past years, Honduras has been blessed with a virtual avalanche of much needed NGO assistance. Now is the time for NGOs to return in full force. (Rosenzweig, 2010)*

The role of volunteers in Honduras and in projecthonduras, and the effects of the 2009 coup will be discussed further in later chapters. Before doing so however, it is appropriate to briefly review projecthonduras' location within the Honduran context.

Locating Projecthonduras in Honduras

This chapter has provided some context for a study of projecthonduras in order to locate the network, and the organisations associated with it, within Honduran history and development. It makes clear the links between Honduran history, politics and development, showing the way in which changes in the Honduran development sector reflect the wider Honduran context (such as the neo-liberal political agenda, the devastation caused by Hurricane Mitch and the 2009 coup). To do this, the first part of this is chapter illustrated how the current economic and social situation of Honduras has been shaped by the history of foreign intervention. It highlighted the depth of US American involvement in Honduras, providing critical contextual information for the exploration of projecthonduras, which later chapters show to be significantly dominated by US Americans. The second half of the chapter outlined current interventions in the form of the development industry, drawing heavily on Jackson's theory that development professionals in Honduras act as globalisers, drawing Honduras further and further into

the global market economy. While Jackson's analysis tends to overlook the numerous small volunteer and mission groups that have proliferated in Honduras over recent decades, as Chapter 8 will discuss, it is precisely these organisations that form the nucleus of projecthonduras.

What is evident from the discussion in this chapter is that projecthonduras is positioned at an intersection; at the convergence of patterns of Honduran underdevelopment, US intervention and the growing phenomenon of international volunteerism. It is also clear that this position in an inherently political one. This conclusion is in marked contrast to Marco's claim that these organisations are the basis of an apolitical, alternative model of development. It also contrasts with Jackson's (2007, pp.33-35) argument that small organisations, such as those who comprise projecthonduras, are relatively powerless on the national stage. Later chapters in this thesis take a deeper look into the particular position of projecthonduras, and the apparent contradictions – and synergies – of the projecthonduras development model and politics within the development context that is Honduras. The next chapter, however, re-focuses on the research itself, outlining the methodology and methods used, and reflecting on the process of doing the research and how the concepts of promise and politics moved to centre stage in this thesis.

Chapter 4: Methodology

This chapter addresses the methodological approach used in this research, including the methodology and methods chosen, and the ethics and politics of the research process. As Chapter 1 noted, this research began with a sense of possibility, but over the duration of the research it became clear that there were some significant shadows. This was reflected in the research process, as the early choice of an explorative and appreciative framework intersected with the reality of doing research in a dispersed network and in the midst of political turmoil.

The first part of this chapter outlines the choice of research methodology and methods, and discusses the practical aspects of, and challenges to, the design and implementation of a research plan, including the use of online methods. The remainder of the chapter reflects on the process of doing this research, particularly the ethical concerns inherent in the use of Internet based data collection methods, and the more unsettling ethical and political challenges presented by the nature of the research topic and the context of the fieldwork, carried out during the 2009 coup.

Ethnography: On and Off-line

This research was originally planned as an ethnographic study, focusing on detailed description in order to provide a nuanced picture of the network and its model for development (Babbie, 2003, p.289). As a research approach, ethnography developed out of a concern to understand the world views and ways of life of people in the context of their everyday lived experiences (Crang & Cook, 2007), and as such it involves the engaged, first-hand study of culture and society (Davies, 2008; Murchison, 2010). Ethnography is characterised by a holistic approach, taking into account the whole social setting, relationships and the wider economic and political context. However while often associated with 'deep description', Wolcott (2008) argues that ethnographic inquiry should go beyond descriptive accounts, and is suitable for answering provocative questions, including "questions as to meanings imputed to action" (p.74)

In this sense it was an appropriate methodology for this project: research within a network that was promoting itself as a new and alternative model for development. As

discussed in Chapter 1 this claim, coupled with the political action observed over the course of the fieldwork, led me to ask significant questions about the way in which development was understood within the network. The wider context and structures in which projecthonduras functions was also highly relevant in this research, which was carried out during, and significantly influenced by, political events in Honduras. Consequently the aim of using ethnography in this context was to explore the experiences and world-views of participants in the projecthonduras.com network in order to answer Wolcott's (2008) 'provocative' questions about both the actions within the network and the meanings underlying them.

While an ethnographic approach was appropriate, it was complicated by projecthonduras' dispersed nature and primarily Internet-based structure. This meant that that the research was of necessity multi-sited, with a significant online component. Multi-sited ethnographies have emerged in recent decades in response to shifts both in anthropology (particularly trends towards inter-disciplinarity), and in the world itself (Hannerz, 2003; Marcus, 1995). In a multi-sited ethnography the researcher may follow people, objects, metaphors, stories or conflicts through multiple sites of participation and observation (Marcus, 1995). In the case of this research, the multiple sites were both on and offline, and as such the methodology needed to reflect the "reciprocal relations and links that exist between the culture of the Internet and between the wider processes taking place" (Sade-Beck, 2004).

These links are the focus of 'virtual' or 'connective' ethnography, a methodological approach informed by the discussions on multi-sited ethnography (O'Connor, Madge, Shaw, & Wellens, 2008). This approach is concerned with relationships and connections between activities and social spaces that are Internet-based and those that may appear distant from the Internet (Leander, 2008). It emerged in response to the way in which early Internet research simply aimed to adapt existing ethnographic practices to the online context, and as such seeks to 'disrupt' the online/offline binary and highlight the way in which Internet spaces are 'complexly connected' to other social spaces (Leander, 2008, pp.36-37).

However although virtual/connective ethnographies are clearly concerned with the offline context, the focus of this type of research is still tends to be on computer-mediated

communications and Internet practices (see Leander, 2008, for examples). While the initial research questions for this thesis were clearly related to ICT and online networking, the dynamics of the network and the highly contested Honduran development context lead to a far broader field of inquiry. Indeed, identifying the boundaries of the field was an on-going challenge in this research, as a lack of visible, public activity in the network (discussed in Chapter 7) made it difficult to pursue the research as a purely virtual ethnography. I therefore chose to expand the boundaries, asking questions and collecting data from a broader range of sources, and asking a broader set of questions while remaining respectful of the boundaries of private spaces. The result of this was a deeper understanding of the network and of the role of projecthonduras' 'human capital' in Honduras, not just the rhetorical promise but also the political and discursive shadows thrown up by the coup and subsequent events.

Figure 1: Blended Ethnography / Netnography
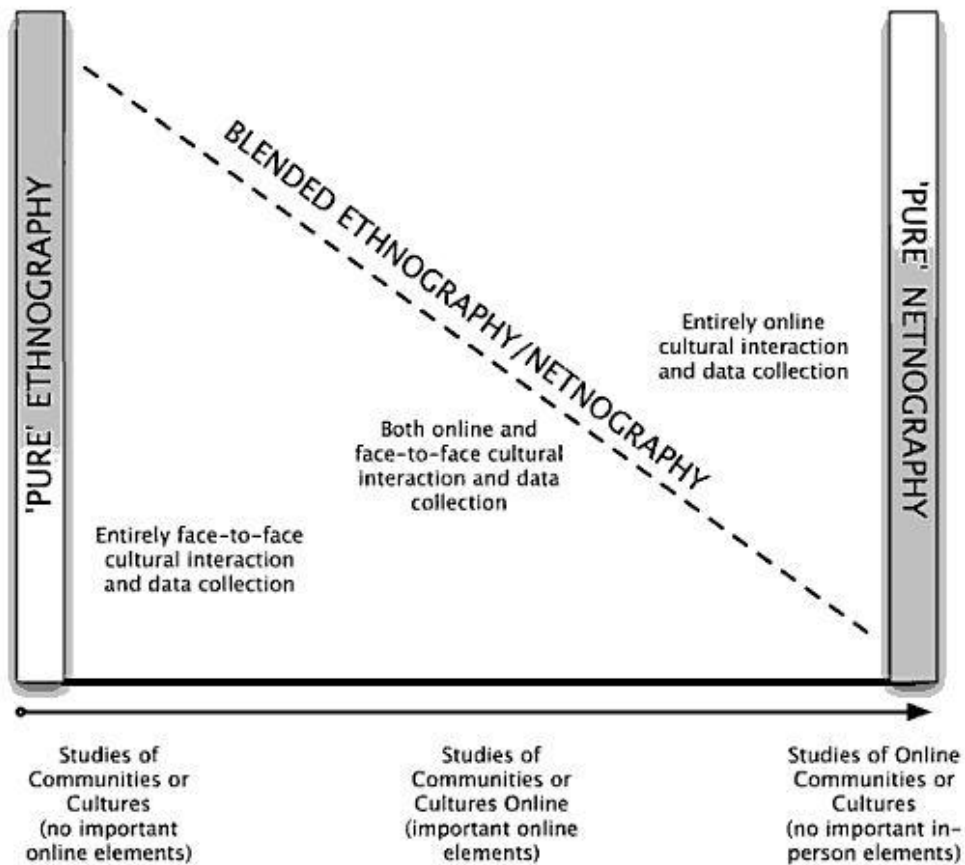
Source: Kozinets, 2009

This expansion of the boundaries clearly required a mixed methods approach to the research. Kozinets (2009) acknowledges this need in his concept of the 'blended netnography'[42] (see Figure 1).

In Kozinets' (2009, p.65) model, a 'pure' netnography is one generated from Internet based data, and addresses questions related directly to Internet-based social worlds, which contrasts with 'pure' or traditional ethnography. However Kozinets diagram of blended ethnography recognises the fact that many, if not most, netnographies are blended, addressing broader questions and requiring both on and offline activity.

Although Kozinets specifically refers to netnography as participant observational research, he notes (p.59) that ethnography itself is assimilated and interlinked with multiple other methods and that netnography naturally and organically extends to include other elements such as interviews, descriptive statistics, archival data collection and other data collection techniques. As such netnographers aim to include the triangulation between online and offline sources in data collection strategies (p.60).

The projecthonduras research clearly sits in the centre of Kozinets' diagram (Figure 1), as the study of a community with important online elements, and which involved both online and face-to-face interaction. The specific on and offline data collection strategies used in this research will be outlined later in this chapter. However before doing so it is important at this point to introduce another important component of the initial research design, appreciative inquiry.

An Appreciative Approach

Although the decision to use ethnographic methods was made early in the research process, I soon found myself with a design problem. I was very aware that a PhD thesis would by nature take an analytical and potentially critical path. However, as will be clear in later discussions in this thesis, the projecthonduras philosophy is based on a philosophy of being positive and of being constructive. The nature of the website rhetoric is undeniably positive and upbeat and it strongly discourages negative and critical talk

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[42] Note that the term 'netnography' is used here as Kozinets intended, as an 'adaption of participant-observational ethnographic procedures' (Kozinets, 2009, p.74), and not in the covert, market-oriented sense that it is used by others, including Langer & Beckman (2005).

within the network. I needed to find a research approach that would both capture the positive energy of the network, while still enabling critique (hopefully constructive critique) and which would not compromise my academic integrity.

Early in the research process I stumbled upon two readings which when viewed in tandem provided a way forward. The first was from J.K. Gibson-Graham. In the introduction to the book *A Post-Capitalist Politics* (2006), Gibson-Graham explain how their thinking and theorising had evolved over 10 years. They highlight a new ethics of thinking, an 'ontological re-framing' which is open to new ideas, and which works to uncover what is possible and that is creative, a thinking that consciously draws upon "*the affective orientations of openness/freedom, interest/curiosity and joy/excitement*" (p.xxix). Gibson-Graham are among the hopeful post-development theorists identified in Chapter 2, and the theoretical position outlined in Chapter 1 was significantly influenced by their work.

The second reading was a research paper from Raymond and Hall (2008). In order to understand how cross-cultural understanding develops through volunteer tourism, Raymond and Hall used a form of action research called appreciative inquiry (AI). This is a method based on Gergen's (1999) conception of social constructionism (discussed in Chapter 2), focusing on positive organisational attributes that may fuel change. Although it is most often utilised as a tool for organisational change, it is one that is becoming increasingly visible among academics (Grant & Humphries, 2006; Michael, 2005; Raymond & Hall, 2008). While it aims to bring out the best and expand the possible, practitioners do not believe it turns a blind eye to the negative, and see AI as a starting point from which to work. They believe it establishes a dynamic in which people are able to speak freely about their experiences rather than from a defensive mode or a presumed need to justify themselves and their work (Michael, 2005; Reed, 2007).

It is this dynamic which made AI a potentially useful tool for research on projecthonduras.com. While still trying to reconcile this with rigorous academic enquiry, I hoped that using AI methods would facilitate relationships with network participants, and capture the positive energy of the group. The AI approach also sits well with Gibson-Graham's new ethics of thinking, and with the theoretical position I had chosen for this research, the generative intersection between post-development and

post-structuralism. As such, although it has not been widely used in Development Studies, Kodama & Kimura (2008) argue that AI has the potential to complement traditional research approaches in development, compensating for their short-comings and improving development efforts in a positive way.

As a result I chose to compliment the ethnographic approach with an explicitly strengths-based, AI-influenced approach to the data collection. As later chapters will show this does not mean I left the critic at the door, rather I consciously chose to engage with the challenges and criticisms in a positive and constructive manner and spent as much time, if not more, looking for the positive qualities of the network as I did for the weaknesses and problems.

As an organisational development tool AI is used as a 4-stage, participatory change process, based on the 4D Model of Discovery, Dreaming, Designing and Destiny (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). This complete AI process requires both the desire to change and the full participation of the organisation, however although it is essentially a tool for organisational change, the approach and tools of AI have been used in a more limited manner in research projects where the full change process was not possible (Michael, 2005; Raymond & Hall, 2008). This was clearly the case for this research, where the AI approach proved very successful in the early stages of the research, particularly in reaching the goals of the discovery phase of the AI cycle: of establishing trust and highlighting strengths, and in identifying topics for later interviews, but it was less successful as the project went on. This was in part because the research aim was not to change the way projecthonduras was run, but also because the 'action research' component was never really a possibility (due to a lack of an active commitment to change from network leadership), and because the increasing politicisation of the network led me back toward a more critical approach to the research.

Methods

Although ethnography and AI originate from very different paradigms there are significant parallels. Both ethnography and AI are concerned with making social relations visible; have a focus on first-hand contact to explore cultures and ideas and a concern with uncovering and revealing the ways in which people make sense out of their daily

lives (Reed, 2007, p.59). The research methods for ethnography and the discovery stage of AI are also similar. At the heart of the discovery stage is the appreciative interview (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p.25), alongside the collection of stories (narratives), focus groups and – on occasion – participant observation (Bellinger & Elliott, 2011; Mantel & Ludema, 2004; Reed, 2007). Ethnographers generally rely on three main methods: participant observation, interviewing and document analysis or archival research, although other supplementary methods may be used (Wolcott, 2008). These three ethnographic methods, initially used in an appreciative manner, formed the backbone of my research (see Table 4).

Table 4: Data Collection Methods

Method	Data Sources
Participant Observation Online	Regular monitoring and reading of the website Observation of and limited participation in email exchanges Observation of and limited participation on Facebook and Twitter
Offline	Observation of and participation in annual conferences in 2008 & 2009 Visits to and limited observation of the homes and workplaces of 14 network participants Residence in Copán Ruinas (home base of the annual conference) for one month, 2008 Residence and work in Yeguare valley for nine months, 2009-2010
Semi-structured interviews Online	21 email interviews (including 8 incomplete interviews) One instant messaging interview (using Skype chat) One Skype voice call interview
Offline	29 face-to-face interviews
Documents and other media Online	www.projecthonduras.com website (including all pages accessible during the study, and pages archived by the Wayback machine from 2000-2008) 33 essays by Marco posted on the projecthonduras.com site 165 email posts from the Yahoo forums (including all emails to the forum March-August 2009) 36 other websites and blog posts mentioning projecthonduras 3 conference programmes and 1 conference paper (from 2005) 1 research report 9 documents related to competitions (entry documents and supporting letters) 2 letters to politicians 63 Facebook notes 132 'tweets' from Twitter (posted between April and December 2009) 29 articles from online news sources '*Honduras This Week*' and "*Honduras Weekly*" 5 articles from other newspapers

While the emphasis changed over the course of the research by the end of the study the balance of participant observation, interviewing and online document analysis was

relatively even. This provided for the triangulation of findings, as well as the ability to gather data over a wide-ranging and often rapidly changing field.

Before discussing the individual data collection methods utilised in this research, it is relevant to review the role of in-country fieldwork in this research. Fieldwork is a defining feature of ethnography (Sluka & Robben, 2007), and anthropological fieldwork in particular has long been characterized by the prolonged residence of the investigator in the field, participating and observing a society in order to understand the insider's view (or emic perspective) of the people they are studying (Sluka & Robben, 2007; Wolcott, 2008). While the initial, primary 'fieldwork' site for this study was online (the dynamics of this will be discussed in the sections on participant observation, interviews and document analysis), in order to immerse myself in the life of people I was studying and to place the network in its social and cultural context it was important to spend time in Honduras. It was also important that I attended the annual conferences in Honduras for the duration of the research project. With scholarship funding I was able to do this, by splitting the Honduran fieldwork into two phases, a two month trip in 2008 and a longer period of nine months living in Honduras in 2009.

During the 2008 trip I attended the annual conference in October, and carried out 12 interviews, seven during the conference and five afterwards, during visits to the homes or workplaces of network participants in and around Copán Ruinas and the city of San Pedro Sula. This provided an ideal opportunity to meet key people in the network, to inform people of the research (in a presentation at the conference) and to trial the AI interview schedule.

In 2009 I was able to secure office space in the department of Socioeconomic Development and Environment at the Zamorano Pan-American Agricultural School (a private university in the Yeguare river valley near Tegucigalpa, Honduras). I was based there for nine months, and initially planned to make regular trips around Honduras to undertake research activities. However, just two weeks into this fieldwork phase the President of Honduras was ousted and the resulting turmoil made travel to other parts of Honduras difficult. Despite this I was able to attend the conference in September, and to meet with a further 20 network participants in Tegucigalpa, Zamorano, Danli, Lago Yojoa, Copán Ruinas, Cofradía, La Ceiba, El Progreso and on the island of Roatan. Fourteen of these I

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interviewed in their home or workplace, and a further nine participants were interviewed at the conference or in neutral spaces (such as shopping malls and cafes). While the number of visits and face-to-face interviews was not high, this extended period of residence in Honduras formed part of the participant observation for this study, and was vital in understanding the political context of Honduras in 2009, and gave significant insight into the reactions of the network at the time.

Participant Observation

Participant observation (PO) is a central method of ethnographic research (Bernard, 2006; DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002). There are four PO roles, first identified by Gold (1958), the complete participant, the participant as observer, the observer as participant and the complete observer. As a result of the online nature of the network, and the low levels of activity (discussed in Chapter 7) my role in this researcher was weighted toward observation although I did participate to some degree. In Gold's typology this is the observer as participant role, where the role of researcher is made public, the researcher is first an observer and participation is secondary. However the participation remained a vital part of the research, indeed Kozinets (2009) argues that it is especially important in the online context in order for the research to avoid becoming primarily a data coding exercise and to remain truly ethnographic (p.75).

Consistent with the blended netnography approach, I carried out PO both on and offline. To do this I needed access to the online forums and to the conference, both of which were provided by Marco (see discussion on access later in this chapter). Online PO activities for this research included regular monitoring and reading of the website and email forums, and participation in email exchanges where appropriate. However despite the importance of participation highlighted by Kozinets (2009), activity in the network during the fieldwork phase of this research was surprisingly low, and as such, for a long time online PO seemed to be largely confined to observation. However as the research progressed it became clear that the very process of undertaking research in an online network was a form of PO. This process will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

Another very important site for PO, and one which was vital to the methods toolbox for this research, was the annual conference held in Copán Ruinas each year. I attended the

conferences in 2008 and 2009, participating as a registered conference delegate and giving presentations of my research work. I attended all sessions (with the exception of a break-out session during the 2008 conference) and social events, and talked and mingled with conference participants during the full three days of each conference. This gave me a good understanding of the composition and focus of network participants, and the functioning of the network and the conference. It also allowed me the opportunity to meet participants in the network face-to-face which was a far more effective means of recruiting for the research than online approaches.

A third site for PO was home and organisation visits with network participants. I had planned to spend time visiting, interviewing and potentially working with individuals and organisations involved in the network in order to understand what they were doing in Honduras. While I did visit many participants either in their home or at their place of work in Honduras, the visits were often short and the effort to visit more participants was made difficult as the individuals and organisations in the network are dispersed across Honduras. Travel in Honduras can be arduous even at the best of times, and was made more complex by the political turmoil and because I had my family in the field. However I was able to meet a variety of network participants this way, and to conduct some very useful interviews during these visits. I also gained some valuable insights into the work of these organisations.

The extended period of residence in Honduras also provided a fourth 'site' for PO, giving me some understanding of the lives of expatriate volunteers in Honduras (as Chapter 8 will show, these form the core of the projecthonduras network). An important part of this was the experience on having my family in the field (my Honduran husband and our then 4-year old daughter). While this research does not explicitly address family issues, many of the participants were resident in Honduras with their families, and being able to share some of their experiences and concerns was a clear advantage. For example while I was working at Zamorano we enrolled my daughter in the pre-kinder (kindergarten) class at a local (private, non-profit) bilingual school. Staff from the school had attended projecthonduras conferences and the school was considered a model for other bilingual schools to emulate (and there are many of these schools in the network). As such our

participation in the life of the school provided a good opportunity for participant observation.

Having my family with me also had some clear advantages (and disadvantages) for the research process. As H. Scheyvens and Nowak (2003) note, taking children into the field "humanises (the researcher) to the community". In this case, having my daughter and husband with me at the conferences, and during some home and project visits appeared to facilitate openness and trust, and the social interaction it generated greatly aided data collection. The data collection process was also helped by the fact that my husband is Honduran and was able to work with me as a research assistant and translator. This enabled me to collect richer data from Honduran participants than might otherwise have been possible, as well as providing an additional pair of eyes and ears in the field (H. Scheyvens & Nowak, 2003).

Despite these clear benefits it was not always advantageous to have family with me. Having my daughter in school meant school activities often cut into research time. The political situation at the time of the fieldwork lead to on-going security concerns, and meant that I was often reluctant to travel with (or without) my family. However in the context of participant observation this all became a part of the research data; what I was facing was very much the same as the issues faced by the research participants.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews provided a significant portion of the data for this study. Interviewees were recruited purposively, with the initial focus on contacting key individuals in the network, and with later interviewing driven by the need to interview a range of network participants (and non-participants).

I started recruitment with a short list of names drawn from active participants in the online forums, and approached these people either at the 2008 conference or by email. This was followed by snowball sampling[43]. Although often labelled as convenience sampling (Gliner & Morgan, 2000, p.155; Potter, 1996, p.107), in this context snowball sampling allowed me to quickly identify the key names in the network. I knew when I

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[43] Snowball sampling is the process of selecting a sample by reference from one person to the next, where participants are asked to nominate or suggest others whose participation would be relevant to the research (Denscombe, 2007, p.17).

had all the key participants in the network represented when the same names kept coming up in every interview. Finding participants in this manner also functioned as a form of PO, giving some awareness of the way in which the network functioned, who knew and interacted with whom, and how the network as a whole was perceived.

Overall response rates for this research were good and there were no outright refusals to participate. Face-to-face requests (mostly made at the conferences) were almost invariably met with a friendly 'yes'. Online recruitment was trickier, although rather than refusing emailed requests were often stymied by a lack of reply. I also posted general requests for interviews and stories on the forums, but this was the least successful recruitment method. More personal direct email approaches were somewhat more successful, particularly with key members of the network who had a strong interest in the network. As Table 4 shows, by the end of the data collection phase I had data from 52 interviews, including 13 complete email interviews, 8 incomplete email interviews, one instant messaging interview (using Skype chat) and one Skype voice call interview. The remainder were face-to-face, and included second interviews with three participants.

Early interviews (undertaken in October and November of 2008) were clearly structured around AI principles, and the questions were based on AI mini-interview protocols devised by Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros (2005), which are designed to both build trust and highlight the strengths of the network, and to highlight topics for more in depth interviews later in the research (see Appendix 1). The questions asked interviewees to identify highlights of their experience with projecthonduras, what they valued about the network, the core factors that enabled the network to function and how they imagined projecthonduras would be in five years' time.

These interviews were therefore semi-structured, based around the interview schedule but with considerable flexibility to bring up new questions and follow the interviewee's interests and conversation. Semi-structured interviewing continued throughout the research, although the interview schedule was changed over time as old questions became irrelevant and new questions became apparent (see Appendix 2 for the final version), and some interviews were very informal and wide-ranging. Face-to-face interviews averaged about an hour, with some basic semi-structured interviews lasting just half an hour while others took 3-4 hours. Email interviews were carried out (with

only one exception) in serial format, so emails with 1-2 questions were sent initially, then followed up as replies were received. This meant that email interviews often stretched over a long time frame, usually weeks and sometimes months, and would often get overtaken by life events, or forgotten[44]. With both on and offline interviews, the longer interviews tended to be with long-time participants in the network, who clearly had much more to say about it.

The extensive use of online methods in this research project had some drawbacks, but overall became an advantage. As highlighted above, email interviews took far longer to complete (and many were not completed at all), and often resulted in much shorter transcripts with less information. Face-to-face interviews provided more natural opportunities to explore issues as they arose and as a result tended to provide richer, less structured data. However, as other researchers have noted (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006; O'Connor et al., 2008) a significant benefit of online interviewing is that it allows access to participants in diverse geographical locations. In a pragmatic sense this meant I could interview participants in a range of locations (from urban centres in the US to isolated projects in the Honduran rain forest) which would have been impossible to visit on a tight time frame and student budget (or in the midst of political crisis). Kivits (2005) also highlights the way in which online interviewing allows for repeat interactions and closer reflection on some research issues (p.47), and this was certainly the case in this research where the best interviews were serial, beginning with an online introduction, and building rapport through repeated interactions, often with at least one in person interview. Finally as indicated above, the process of undertaking online interviews doubled as a form of PO, providing deep and fascinating insights into the way in which the projecthonduras network operates, in particular the way in which the network is used to make contacts and the type of networking that occurs.

Document Analysis

While participant observation and interviews are generally relied on as primary data in ethnographic studies, the analysis of documents written by others (also referred to as

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[44] If an emailed question did not get a response I would resend it twice then terminate the interview, assuming the participant was no longer in a position to answer, but having received permission at the start, the incomplete interview data was included in the final analysis.

archival data), also has an important place in ethnography (O'Reilly, 2005; Wolcott, 2008). Document analysis includes the examination of texts produced by and about the group under study. Although it often takes a secondary role to oral interactions (Gobo, 2008, p.237; Hine, 2000, p.51), it is particularly important in studies such as this one with a significant Internet-based component, where researchers can access a 'convenient bank of online data' including posted text, images and other messages (Kozinets, 2009, p.104). This 'bank' can be analysed as documents or text in a similar manner to the analysis of conventional text-based materials (Sixsmith & Murray, 2001, p.424). As such, Hine (2000) describes the Internet as both a space for interaction (hence the need for participant observation) and as being composed of text, with no fixed boundary between the concepts. Using the Internet is therefore a process of reading and writing texts, and Hine argues that the ethnographer's job is to develop an understanding of the meanings that underlie and are enacted through these textual practices (p.50).

This metaphor of the Internet as a bank of ethnographic data is very relevant in this study. Projecthonduras produces considerable amounts of textual material in the form of webpages, email and social networking posts. Marco is a prolific writer and frequently posts essays and articles on projecthonduras.com and related forums. In addition there have also been press releases and articles written in mainstream and online news sources, and a number of letters and competition applications. This meant that the collection of documents and textual materials became an important part of the data collection for this study. As Table 4 shows, over 500 data sources were collected for this study, including 165 email posts from the Yahoo forums (all emails to the forum between March and August of 2009 and some key emails from outside that period); 33 essays by Marco posted on the projecthonduras.com site; 36 other websites and blog posts mentioning projecthonduras[45]; 21 letters, news articles and competition entries; 63 notes from Facebook; 29 articles from online news sources '*Honduras This Week*' and "*Honduras Weekly*", and 132 'tweets' from Twitter (posted between April and December 2009).

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[45] Blog posts were collected by using Google blog search, using the term "projecthonduras". The search was saved in Google reader, which was checked weekly for new results from September 2008 through until the end of 2009.

Story Collection

To complement and extend the use of PO, interviews and documentary data, I decided early in the research process to collect stories about the network as a way of gaining an understanding of the way in which the network was being used and the impacts it was having. Story collection is a method that is commonly used in ethnography, often in the form of life history research (Plummer, 2001). Story telling is also used in AI to draw attention to the strengths and successes of the organisation being researched (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom, 2010). In this study I planned to identify stories about how people had used the network and to follow them up in interviews and, as appropriate, through document analysis. In early forum posts, and at the conference on Honduras in 2008 I explicitly asked for stories about the way in which projecthonduras had been used by, or useful to, network participants. However story collection was not as successful as I had thought it would be. Although I was able to collect a few stories (some of which have made it into this thesis) people often struggled to think of a specific time or episode where networking through projecthonduras made a difference, and either gave none, or a very general list lacking specifics. This seemed to reflect the nature of the network which seems to function mostly as an introductory service, an observation which is discussed further in Chapter 7. Once people have made some contacts through the network those relationships are maintained in private spaces and therefore the outcomes and stories related to those relationships were not immediately associated with projecthonduras.

Triangulation

As the preceding discussion has indicated, there was considerable overlap in the methods used in this study, particularly between the actual data collected and the process of collecting that data. As Skågeby (2011, p.410) notes, user engagement and communication sharing are not only the central activities of online communities, they lay the ground for online methods and data collection. By using the network to engage with and communicate with participants, I was clearing enacting a form of PO. This overlap

became an important form of triangulation[46] between data and method, as many analytical and theoretical breakthroughs were made at this intersection.

This intersection often took the form of a mirror. For example the effect of the online structure of the network on interactions between participants was also reflected in my own online interactions as a researcher. An example of this was that I found the website was most useful for identifying potential participants, and personal emails and face-to-face connection at the conference were the most successful means of making initial contact. This mirrored the way in which most projecthonduras participants emphasised the usefulness of the network in making contact with others. Being able to quickly identify and find contact details was a major plus for online networking – both in research and in development practice. It is also reflective of the nature of networking though projecthonduras, which tends to begin with introductions in the public sphere of the Internet forums or conference, and which either remain short and formal or quickly move into private spaces (personal email and online chat) supplemented by infrequent face-to-face meetings. Despite this, mirroring also highlighted some concerns. In my research I found that the structure of the website and forums funnelled me towards certain organisations and types of organisations, those that are sold on the idea of the network and understand its philosophy, and whose work reflects the priorities of the network.

Essentially, this mirroring of the research data and my experience undertaking research became a form of participant observation. While I was not a participant in the true sense (I was not directly involved in development work in Honduras) I was more than an observer. I was a network user. However as this excerpt from my research journal indicates, I did not realise the importance of this immediately:

> I'm a bit slow sometimes. I have just become a "fan" of (a) Project, and 'friended'
> another projecthonduras participant on Facebook and it occurred to me that this
> IS participant observation. These are people I met at the conference who I am now
> following online. I had thought this sort of stuff was a bit peripheral to the
> research but now realise it IS the research, it is participant observation. I am

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[46] Triangulation refers to the use of more than one data collection, theoretical or methodological approach investigate a research question in order to enhance confidence in the research findings (Bryman, 2004).

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> *DOING networking with people met THROUGH projecthonduras.com.*
> *Consciously but without really knowing what the outcome of the connection will*
> *be.*

While I was not always able to visit participants or interview them face-to-face, I could follow their activities and keep in touch online. Much of the data for this thesis was gathered in this way, by simply being in the network, observing and using the network tools. It reinforced the positive outcomes, and highlighted particular issues and frustrations. I was able to experience the use of the network as projecthonduras participants did, from the joy at connections made to the frustration of unanswered emails and posts.

Participant observation was also a useful research tool for understanding the network structure, particularly online. One of the issues raised in some of the early interviews was the difficulty in navigating the website and finding useful information. I could understand this – while I had been somewhat familiar with the website prior to starting the research, it still took me a while to get the structure worked out. Pages on the website were largely static but also subject to random, if infrequent, unannounced changes. Often it seemed more like a site full of links, and it was easy to see how it could be quite difficult to work out where to get help if you weren't familiar with the offsite networking tools including Yahoo groups. For example, I had planned to use the Honduras Aid Map (Figure 3, Chapter 5) to sample network participants, until I realised that it was not representative of organisations in the network, rather the organisations were added by Marco himself (often without notification). As a result I did not find the links from the map itself to be a reliable means of finding participants who had actually interacted with the network. Consequently finding research participants required me to both dig down into the forums and to utilise the contacts that I did have. It was, therefore, not difficult to believe that some network participants found navigating and using the website to be a frustrating exercise, and had difficulty finding contacts that may be useful to them. This triangulation of participant observation and interview data was particularly valuable when I began the analysis.

Analysis

One of most identifiable features of ethnographic research is thick description, a detailed depiction of a phenomenon that aims to fully convey the meaning intended by the participant in context (Fetterman, 2010, p.125). The process of taking raw data and turning it into this ethnographic description requires some form of categorisation and coding of the data, data analysis and writing (Gobo, 2008; Murchison, 2010). These processes are distinct steps but they frequently overlap (O'Reilly, 2005, p.177), as they did in this research. In this research data coding and analysis commenced during the data-gathering process. Data was identified, saved, transcribed (where necessary) and coded with emerging themes from the very beginning. These codes were periodically reviewed, allowing for the identification of gaps and the generation of new ideas through the data, and new categories and concepts were therefore developed in a recursive, reflexive manner.

Given the large amount of textual material gathered in this study, in order to facilitate data management and analysis of information all of the data (including interview transcripts, field notes, and Internet documents) were loaded into NVivo[47] as soon as they were processed. NVivo was used to collate the data, to categorise and code it (fracturing or deconstruction), and to begin the process of reconstruction (re-coding and memoing). This also facilitated the triangulation of information throughout the study, enabling me to gradually build up a detailed picture of the network. Beekhuyzen (2010) uses the metaphor of the looking glass to analogise this process of data analysis which, as noted in the discussion of triangulation, is particularly apt for the work in this thesis. In this case the metaphor is drawn from the looking glass in Alice in Wonderland, where qualitative analysis is much like the fracturing of the looking glass. The glass is broken up into manageable pieces and then reconstructed to reflect back a view of reality. Beekhuyzen (p.1) notes that the looking glass analysis also has a mystical quality, which reflects the exploratory nature of qualitative research and argues that NVivo adds to this metaphor – by becoming the looking glass itself; the mirror enables the researcher to 'smash' the data and to reconstruct it into something meaningful. In other words NVivo allows the

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[47] NVivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software package which is designed to help researchers organise and analyse un-structured and non-numerical data.

data to be easily smashed so that it can be put back together to provide a reflection of reality, effectively seeing the data through the category and not the research event (p.6).

The use of software such as NVivo takes some of the tedium out of data coding but did not eliminate the need to think and deliberate, generate codes, and reject and regenerate them (Basit, 2003). These processes continued throughout the study, largely through writing. The writing for this study started early, with memos and field notes added to NVivo as they were generated. This process of writing though the analysis is an integral part of Glaser's (1978) grounded theory method, but it is equally appropriate in ethnography which places a heavy emphasis on the writing and analysis of field notes, and which is of itself a dualistic term which covers both the method and the final report (Murchison, 2010, p.123).

St Pierre (in St. Pierre & Richardson, 2005) identifies writing as a method of inquiry and states that she uses writing to think: "I wrote my way into particular spaces I could not have occupied by sorting data with a computer programme or by analytic deduction" (p.970). This reflects to some degree the way in which the analysis occurred in this research. In the first layer of analysis, data were entered into and coded into NVivo, but the formal and structured analysis within NVivo was complimented with a second layer of analysis through the thinking that happened while writing memos, vignettes and early chapter drafts. I gained insights and new revelations while writing about events, people or ideas that built on the NVivo categories and codes. The writing was also a means to work through more personal perceptions and issues as they arose in the research, to make sense of the world and my position in relationship to structures and events. It is to a discussion of these issues that we turn now.

Reflections: Ethics, positionality and politics

Ethnography, which by definition is concerned with people's lives, often raises significant ethical issues. However while discussions of research ethics are often focussed on the researchers conduct and the utilisation of data (usually codified by professional associations and institutions) research of this nature also requires critical reflection on issues of politics, power and positionality. As Armbruster (2008) notes, there is a need for researchers to recognise their own cultural, biographical and political selves, and to

recognise the "limits and partiality of one's own moral, political and academic certainties" (p.17). As such, the remainder of this chapter is a reflection on both the ethics of the research process, and on the political position I took over the course of researching and writing about projecthonduras.

The Ethics of Consent and Anonymity

Consent and anonymity are, for good reason, central concerns of institutional ethics processes, and were identified as issues of concern for this project very early in the research process[48], particularly in relation to the large proportion of Internet-based data collection the study required[49]. The provision of fully informed consent before the commencement of data collection is a cornerstone of ethics in social science research (Sixsmith & Murray, 2001, p.425). It is usually obtained with the use of an information sheet which provides information about the research and advises people of their rights as participants (R. Scheyvens, Nowak, & H. Scheyvens, 2003, pp.143), and this was the way in which I obtained and documented consent for this most interviews (Appendices 4 and 5). However, given the informal nature of many of the interviews and research-related conversations consent for use of some data was sometimes obtained verbally (often recorded on a voice recorder with the interview audio) or retrospectively, particularly for personal emails and conversations[50]

The online context of much of this research presented some particular ethical challenges. Initially there were also some specific issues regarding the distribution and collection of the consent forms for online participants. This was addressed by developing a website containing the same research information that was on the information sheet. Participants were directed to the website or sent a PDF consent form attached to an email. They were asked to indicate via return email that they had read the form and consented to participation in the research, and these emails were filed with the interview data.

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[48] This research was subject to a departmental ethics review before fieldwork commenced, and was later accepted by Massey University as a low risk project. It therefore did not require full ethics committee approval.
[49] Other issues discussed in the ethics review included access to participants, and the role of the researcher. These will be discussed further later in this chapter.
[50] As will be discussed later, this research was overt, and all participants knew I was a researcher before engaging in dialogue with me. Retrospective permission was requested on a few occasions where non-research conversations (on and offline) yielded data I wanted to include in the analysis and writing.

In addition to this there were concerns about the use of newsgroup postings and other Internet based data sources, which formed an important data source for this research. As Sixsmith and Murray (2001) note, the question of whether or not it is necessary to obtain consent for the use of email posts and archives is highly contentious. Some researchers consider posts on the Internet to be in the public domain (and therefore consent is unnecessary), while others argue that the use of Internet material without consent is unethical (Flicker, Haans, & Skinner, 2004; Sixsmith & Murray, 2001). At the core of the debate is the question of whether information posted on the Internet is considered public or private (Sixsmith & Murray, 2001, p.426-427), and more specifically, whether the authors believe or assume that their communications are private. In response to this question the ethics working committee of the Association of Internet Researchers (AoIR, 2002) state that the researcher has a greater responsibility to protect privacy where the authors might reasonably expect that their posts are private. However they argue that if the author is posting with the belief that their work is public (for example in publicly accessible archives or interactions intended by their authors to be public) then there may be fewer obligations to protect individual privacy (AoIR ethics working committee, 2002, p.7).

This was the approach I took in this research. Data from non-password protected and non-membership websites (including blogs) was considered to be in the public domain, and as such, specific consent was not sought for its use. Consent was sought for the collection of data from websites that required passwords or membership, where the author might reasonably expect their postings to be private. This was complicated however by the nature of the projecthonduras network, which makes extensive use of email lists and social networking forums which utilise passwords or membership processes, but are comprised of thousands of users, creating a logistical and significant ethical concern for data collection. Obtaining individual consent from every participant in the online forums was clearly logistically impossible. To address this, initial access and permission to do research in the network was requested through Marco, the moderator and founder (see section on Access below). Once this was assured an introductory email was sent to all email groups in order to ensure that participants in the network were aware of the presence of a researcher on the email list. Regular reminders and/or updates to the group were sent to help 'catch-up' new members who may not read the archived

information (Sixsmith & Murray, 2001, p.426). Additionally, at both conferences I attended I was clearly and unambiguously introduced as a researcher working with the network, and information about the research and my activities was given both publicly (in conference presentations), and privately in individual conversations and interactions. Even with these mechanisms in place, data from non-public password controlled websites and from non-formal research conversations were used carefully, with full anonymity for those from whom direct consent was not possible.

The issues of anonymity & confidentiality are also controversial, with different disciplines approaching the question in significantly differing ways (Sixsmith & Murray, 2001; Tilley & Woodthorpe, 2011). In development studies, as with anthropology, the researcher is generally expected to determine whether or not participants wish to keep their identities private and, if they do, to do their best to respect that decision (R. Scheyvens, Nowak, et al., 2003; Tilley & Woodthorpe, 2011). This was the initial approach taken in this research, however it was complicated by the extensive use of Internet based data. This is because the nature of the Internet makes it very difficult, arguably impossible, for researchers to guarantee participants' responses will be private and will not be able to be traced back to individual respondents (Davies, 2008, p.167; Tilley & Woodthorpe, 2011). This issue was addressed in three ways. Firstly, as discussed above, data collected from non-password protected and non-membership websites was considered public, and as such anonymity was not necessary. Secondly, when consent was obtained complete confidentiality was not promised, however participants were assured that all computer-based data and communications were kept secure[51]. Where anonymity could be expected but not assured particular care was taken with the use of direct quotes and potentially identifying data. Thirdly, interviewees (on and offline) were given the option of a having a pseudonym in the final thesis. As it transpired many participants opted to have their real (first) name used in this thesis, and therefore most names in this thesis are real names, and any pseudonyms are highlighted as such in the footnotes.

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[51] Data were kept on a password-protected laptop computer and USB stick, which I carried or kept in a secure location at all times. Identifying data was removed as far as practicable from documents that were printed for backup or analysis.

Access to the Projecthonduras Network

As will be discussed in the next chapter, Marco maintains significant control, even ownership, of the projecthonduras network. As such his permission and assistance was required from the beginning of the research project. Indeed in the absence of formal organisational structures his was the only authorisation required to access the network, so there were no formal procedures or agreements to negotiate.

The initial permission to carry out the research was given in my very first online conference call with Marco, prior to the commencement of the research. Subsequently I sought access to the Yahoo and Facebook forums through membership requests (sent to Marco as the group administrator) and to the conference through the registration process (also sent to Marco as conference organiser); at all times making clear that my position would be as a researcher and that I would be collecting data. With Marco's approval I was able to access all areas of the network, and he assisted with the initial process of snowball sampling, providing the names and contact information for key individuals and organisations in the network.

This reliance on Marco had some significant implications for the research. Relying on one person for permission and access was not always a comfortable position, as this except from my research journal, written during the conference in 2009, notes:

> *I have finally come to realise what the discomfort has been in this research. I had been feeling that he (Marco) holds the power, and indeed he did initially, (but) I now (potentially) have the power to represent the network…*
>
> *It is not a comfortable feeling… So far I've been more concerned with access and self-representation, becoming engaged, getting trust. This conference marked a break from that where these are no longer primary concerns. While I am still actively collecting data… my concerns are (now) with doing a good analysis, academic integrity, with writing and how to represent others. And that is where the power has shifted to me.*

What I had realised at this point was that although Marco held the power of access to the network, this had become less important as the research progressed. In the latter stages, after I had made my own research networks, collected the data and begun to analyse and

write, the power shifted. There is a particular power inherent in writing, and in representing others; in this case my job was to represent projecthonduras, Marco's life work. This was particularly uncomfortable as the politics of the network became more distinct and my critique clearer. These tensions will be explored in more detail in later chapters.

Researcher Positionality

As the discussion on access highlights, my position as researcher in this study was complex. Unlike most research in development which focuses directly on the poor and marginalised (R. Scheyvens, Scheyvens, & Murray, 2003), this research can be characterised as studying sideways, as it focuses on people with who are similar socially and culturally to the researcher (Hannerz, 2006). This research position was further complicated by the nature and philosophy of the projecthonduras network, and the particular political climate in Honduras during the data collection period. This section explains the research position I took during fieldwork, while issues related to the political events will be discussed later in this chapter.

The term 'studying sideways' was introduced by anthropologist Ulf Hannerz (1998) to describe the process of studying others with practices not unlike the researchers, or who are "in a transnational contact zone, and engaged there in managing meaning across distances, although perhaps with different interests" (p.109). It is an apt description for my relationship with my research participants. As a white, Western, registered nurse who had once volunteered with an NGO in Central America I had much in common with many of my research participants. I also shared a similar position in relation to Honduran society. Living and working in Honduras I was clearly an outsider, despite my family contacts and long term relationship with the country. There were however, some significant differences between my role as a researcher and that of most projecthonduras participants, and my New Zealand nationality was different to that of most in projecthonduras who are largely of North American origin. However in terms of my position in Honduran society I could easily locate myself in much the same position as the participants in projecthonduras.

This location was in evidence both in my relationship with the expatriates in projecthonduras, and in my interaction with Hondurans. I moved easily amongst the expatriate volunteers and humanitarian workers, and although my position as a researcher was sometimes treated with some wariness, emphasising my past as an RN and volunteer was usually sufficient to build rapport (indeed I was aware some participants may have viewed me as a potential recruit, even though I was always clear about explaining my position as a researcher). I understood their language and the humanitarian and religious motivations (having been bought up Christian) and could easily interact in a direct, egalitarian manner.

Working with Hondurans was more challenging, in part because they were more difficult to access (there being far fewer of them in the network, and being less visible) and partly related to language issues as my conversational Spanish skills were not up to the task of in- depth interviewing and I needed a translator for some of the interviews. I also found it far more difficult to communicate the research aims – at least one Honduran participant appeared to believe I may be able to help with fundraising; and it was much more difficult to engage in anything more than a superficial conversation about projecthonduras. While the Honduran participants in the research were all educated and employed (in a variety of projects and programmes) the challenges of interviewing across cultural barriers was readily apparent.

Despite this, the term studying sideways remains an appropriate description of my research relationships. Over three quarters of the participants in the study were of North American or European origin. Almost all of the documentary data (websites, emails, posts etc.) were in English and from North American sources. The Hondurans I did have research contact with were mostly professionals in the NGO sector, the same social group I would be working alongside if I were doing nursing and humanitarian work in Honduras. Should my life have taken a different course I could well have been a participant in the network rather than a researcher.

The implications of studying sideways are significant. The data gathered is richer for the underlying understanding of the participant's worldview, and because of the rapport I was able to establish. As Plesner (2011) notes this type of research can encourage a dialogic or symmetrical conversation where both interviewer and interviewee are

engaged in making meaning, and indeed some interviews for this research took that form of active interviewing. However Plesner (2011) cautions that familiarity with the language and backgrounds of research participants can be a pitfall, blurring the contributions of interviewers and interviewees, and meaning that some ideas may pass un-noticed and un-questioned as obvious truths or 'common-sense'.

While I was clearly 'studying sideways' for much of this research project, my positionality was further complicated by the philosophy of the projecthonduras network. As noted in the discussion on AI, the position of a critical researcher in a network focused on being positive and constructive was potentially a fraught one and required careful thought. The decision to use AI techniques was therefore a conscious decision, albeit only partially successful, to try and engage in a positive manner, and to frame critique constructively.

Finally, on a practical level, there were issues related to my role in the network, and in relation to the leadership and central core of projecthonduras. In the former, my position in the network was relatively clear and pre-defined. I was fully a researcher. Although engaged in participant observation, interacting online and attending the annual conferences, the emphasis (as discussed previously) was on observation. Although it may have been possible to take a more participatory role by becoming involved in a projecthonduras-linked organisation, or to form my own for the duration of the research project, the logistical effort and costs (in time and money) outweighed the potential benefits. In this case 'studying sideways' was a distinct advantage, as I was able to use my own, very relevant, cultural capital as a nurse and former volunteer. I positioned myself as a researcher whose work as a volunteer nurse in Central America had given rise to questions about the nature of development work, a genuine position that enabled me to build trust and rapport with research participants.

My relationship to the projecthonduras leadership was a little more complex. Although I was at no time a part of the central core of the network or even particularly close to the leadership I did have access to and the trust of that group, including Marco. This was beneficial in the process of collecting data from the leadership group and from committed participants in the network, but made it more difficult to engage with critics of the network. It was largely because of this, along with the increasing politicisation of the network (which as this thesis will show, became a significant and complex part of this

research) that in the latter stages of data collection I consciously distanced myself from the leadership group. This was perhaps most clearly shown in my physical positioning at the annual conferences in Copán. At the first conference I attended (in Copán Ruinas in 2008) I made myself visible, moving around the venue, talking to people, and in particular, making regular contact with Marco and other key people in the network. At the second conference (2009) I took a more low key position, seating myself with and talking to academics and conference delegates on the fringes of the network and having significantly less contact with the leadership and organisers.

Politics and Research

As previously noted, the political climate of Honduras had a marked effect on the study design and outcomes. In terms of the research fieldwork and data collection this included practical issues related to doing fieldwork in a country in crisis, as well as significant issues regarding my political positionality which needed very careful thought.

The coup occurred two weeks after I arrived in Honduras for the second, and main, fieldwork phase. Demonstrations, road blocks and curfews all made travel around the country challenging. As discussed above I was able to proceed with most of the trips planned, however I missed several meetings and interviews with participants as people curtailed or cancelled travel in and to Honduras (many participants were based in the USA and travelled to Honduras for regular, short trips), although I was able to complete some of these by email.

While the events challenged my research plans, they provided an unexpected opportunity for data collection. With my fieldwork time in Honduras covering the period from June 2009 – February 2010 I was in the country not only for the coup, but for Zelaya's return in September 2009, the elections in November and the inauguration of Porfirio Lobo in January 2010. I was able to observe events as they happened, and to see first-hand the development of people's attitudes and thinking. Watching the on-going events gave a unique insight into the evolution of the crisis. As should be clear from the discussion in this thesis, this had a profound effect on the direction of the research. Where previously I had been interested solely in the development model and the use of ICT, the events and the discourse around the coup revealed very clearly the politics that underlie the model.

While the tension between the apolitical philosophy (see Chapter 6) and the increasing politicisation of the network discourse (see Chapter 10) created a fruitful arena for data collection I nevertheless felt an increasing disquiet as there was a growing gap between my personal politics and the politics of much of the network. I was sympathetic to the resistance movement from a very early point in the fieldwork, and this strengthened, much as the pro-coup position of much of projecthonduras also intensified over that time.

Initially I kept my political views quiet as the leadership of projecthonduras clearly saw it as an apolitical group and I was aware that most of the participants in projecthonduras were not politically motivated. I was also concerned about safety. I did not necessarily expect to get in trouble for my political position, but as I had my family with me in Honduras, and my research to do, I felt it wise to be cautious. As a result I did not participate in any anti-coup activities, and kept my online profile (including my research website, Facebook and Twitter profiles which some research participants had access to) relatively low key and neutral. This became increasingly difficult however, as my personal political position became stronger. I was also becoming aware that my research topic was changing and my thesis would need to address the politicisation of the network. This meant my political position was increasingly relevant to the research, and withholding it was ethically risky. While I felt it was not appropriate or necessary to make a big announcement, I began to cautiously and carefully share my political position in online posts (not on projecthonduras itself but in other forums) and some research related conversations.

Although the issue became less urgent on my return to New Zealand, it caught up with me again in September and October of 2010, with the publication of both Marco's book and Pine and Vivar's expose. At this point, rather than being an issue of my representation of myself, it was an issue of the representation of projecthonduras in my written work, which was well underway. After much careful thought regarding the implications of all this for the thesis, I wrote the following in my research journal:

> *How did this happen? Llorens and Pepe Lobo at the conference. Marco publishing a book about the coup. Adrienne Pine publishing all over the web labelling Marco and projecthonduras as golpistas…*

I thought for a while about what Adrienne Pine wrote… and I am now concluding that she has done me a favour. She has done the expose… and now I can do the explaining... I can explain not only the politicisation, but the promise, the glimmers of possibility I've been looking for from the start. I have the rich data of over two years of participant observation, texts, interviews... I know these people. I also have a similar background to many of them… I believe I can write with both sympathy to the politics of the resistance, and (I hope) an understanding of the politics of Marco and projecthonduras.

…Now I think I have a thesis. Unsurprisingly it is not the one I first thought I would write…. It is a story. The story of how an apolitical development network became heavily politicised. How it came to host government representatives, including a President - and still calls itself apolitical. How it came to be targeted by political activists. This is interesting.

In this approach I essentially took a Weberian position. As Hammersley (2005) notes, for Weber research must be value neutral in the sense of pursuing the truth, but can be partisan in that the problems selected for investigation, and the explanations, theoretical evaluations and prescriptions constructed may be of direct relevance to particular practical values and to the interests of specific groups (p.71). As such, I continued data collection and analysis with an open mind, but the choice to integrate the political questions into the research, and the construction of the thesis reflects my politics as a researcher in contemporary Honduras, and my theoretical position within development studies.

Collecting, Analysing and Representing the Discourse

The challenge of writing and representing people whose beliefs, practices and politics are different from that of the researcher is not something I faced alone. Of particular relevance to my thinking were Ayella (1990), Ginsburg (1993) and Mosse (2006). While projecthonduras is clearly not a cult, Ayella's observations regarding studying with and writing about cults and charismatic groups has some relevance here. Ayella notes that after completion of the data collection the researcher of such groups is confronted with some important questions: Can one generalise from one's research? How representative of the group are one's observations? These are certainly questions I faced, drawing data

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on the development model of some organisations or indeed from projecthonduras itself, does not mean that all organisations within the network subscribe to the same model or set of beliefs. Ayella also points out the problem of critique vs. co-optation, where negative assessments may make it more difficult for the group to mobilise resources (becoming 'deviantised') and positive assessments may be co-opted into group discourse and lend prestige to the group. She argued that although it may be difficult, the researcher should not let his or her agenda be set by the group.

The problem of representation is also discussed by Ginsburg (1993) in an essay addressing the way in which she tackled the problem of writing about right wing women, a group whose politics she disagreed with, but with whom she was socially close. Ginsburg contends that Malinowski's axiom (that the ethnographers task is to represent the "native's" point of view) is problematic in situations where the readership of a research report is complex and may include research participants (a significant factor in studying sideways), and where the researcher may disagree with the position of the research participants. As with Ayella, Ginsburg contends that the researcher should not speak *for* the "native". She argues that in this situation it is best not to take the usual anthropological approach of playing mediator (which in a socially close situation can lead academics and peers to accuse you of becoming one of 'them'). Instead she approaches writing as a dialog, as a 'polyphonic structure', presenting the voices of the research participants juxtaposed with the voice of the anthropologist so that the audience encounters the voice of the participants more directly, and where the voice of the "other" is audible but distinguished from that of the researchers.

Mosse (2006) takes this one step further again, asserting that ethnographers need to be aware of the power inherent in representation, that the researchers account "does not just stand alongside or compete equally with other or preceding ones, it attempts to encompass them in the guise of subject matter" (p.950). He therefore argues that 'contests after the field' and the allowance of space for objections are vitally important, and that

researchers should be prepared for the continuation of fieldwork relations into writing and publication[52].

Summary

What should be clear from the discussion in this chapter is the way in which the research process itself became part of the data, reflecting the nature of both the projecthonduras network and the practice of online research. This is also perhaps evidence of the way in which the messy realities of doing research in a dispersed network and in the midst of political turmoil can create openings for what Gibson-Graham's (2006, p.xxx) 'ontological re-framing', opening up the field from which the unexpected can emerge. While Gibson-Graham emphasise the way in which ontological re-framing creates ground for a 'politics of possibility', in this research it is clear that the messy reality in fact serves to highlight both the 'glimmers' of promise and the shadows of the projecthonduras network. Indeed it was the emergence of the shadowy concerns of politics that drove the research away from initial appreciative approach and into deeper analysis of the roots and impacts of the network.

Although the primary intent of this chapter has been to outline the methodological approach and methods, and to reflect on the ethics and politics of the research process, it has also begun to introduce some of the themes of the thesis, including the promise and pitfalls of online networking, and of politics in development. However before we can explore these themes in any depth it is important to understand why and how projecthonduras was formed and what it purports to be. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

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[52] While the writing of a thesis is by necessity a solitary process rather than a participatory one, it is reasonable to expect that there may be some contest over the representation of the projecthonduras model in this thesis. This discussion can perhaps be read as an invitation to dialogue and discussion. Certainly it serves to highlight my intent to write in dialogue.

Chapter 5: Networking: The History, Goals and Structure of Projecthonduras

> *projecthonduras.com is an alternative model of development for Honduras based on using information and communications technology (ICT) to identify, mobilize and coordinate all the available human capital. By "human capital", we mean things such as time, energy, expertise, experience, talent, and contacts... resources that really only have value when people become personally engaged. It is this engagement that is the key to truly changing Honduras for the better because it has the effect of transforming the way we look at human beings in need. It creates an infectious awareness that pulls us, our friends, our relatives, our acquaintances, and our colleagues out of our apathy and isolation. (projecthonduras.com, 2008).*

This quote, taken from the homepage of projecthonduras.com in late 2010, is the first description of projecthonduras that most people will read when they encounter the network. It is also a good starting place for this discussion of the structure and purpose of projecthonduras, highlighting the most important features of the network, the use of ICT and 'human capital', and the "infectious engagement" of people in helping Honduras. This chapter provides background to, and elaborates on these themes, first describing the history and development of the network before looking more closely at the aims and objectives and the organisation and structure of the network, and ending with a discussion of Marco Cáceres and his role at the centre of the network.

History & Description

Projecthonduras.com was created by Marco Cáceres, a Honduran-American aerospace analyst. Born in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, Marco moved to the United States as a small child where he completed his education, studying history and political science at the University of Richmond, Virginia. In the 1980s Marco worked as a legislative correspondent and legislative aide on the personal staff of US Republican Senator Pete V. Domenici of New Mexico, then as a market analyst for Jane's Information Group of the

UK. In 1990 Marco joined the Teal Group, an aerospace and defence consulting firm in Fairfax, Virginia, where he works as a senior analyst and director of space studies[53].

Growing up in the United States Marco frequently travelled to Honduras, where his main goal was to visit family and enjoy himself. But as many Honduran expatriates and frequent visitors to Honduras have found, the problems faced by those living in this small Central American nation are difficult to ignore.

> *Ever since I was travelling to Honduras in my life as a kid, and as a young adult, I would have conversations with relatives. I might obviously notice Honduras' problems but my goal was to come to Honduras to visit family and to have a good time. But over time it just... just kept on grinding at me that the same problems were occurring and nothing was being done, and things seemed to be getting worse and every conversation I would have with my relatives it as like 'well this is getting worse',' this is getting worse',' the price of beans is going up', ' we're without water 3 or 4 times a day', 'we've got electricity projects that were undertaken by the government to resolve these issues, they were always done poorly and so the problems never got fixed or they got worse'. (Marco, interview, 2008)*

Marco also became aware of the large amounts of aid money that came into Honduras and what little difference it appeared to be making. In the late 1990s, he had a revelation:

> *I saw all the money that was being poured into Honduras in terms of aid and was like, well why doesn't that make a difference... so at some point... I had a revelation that perhaps maybe the Internet could be used for bringing people together, primarily Hondurans that were in North America that were professionals (Marco, interview, 2008)*

In early 1998 Marco met another Honduran-American, Paulina Bendana, a strategic planner also in the aerospace industry. Paulina had a similar vision:

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[53] Marco calls his work for the Teal Group his "day job". While his personal and professional background is not immediately relevant to the discussion in this chapter, it does have implications when considering the political framework in which projecthonduras operates; something which will be discussed further in chapters 8 and 9.

There were friends & contacts I had who worked in organizations such as the
World Bank, InterAmerican Development Bank, Pan American Health
Organization, etc. and I thought it would be cool to form a network among all of
us. My vision was to link into the know-how, networks, and experience of this
group to create innovative ways of tapping into the Washington DC -- and later,
US and global, intellectual, social and financial capital for the benefit of
Honduras's economic and social development. (Paulina, email interview, 2009)

That summer they started toying with the idea of creating a website to bring these people together to network and share information on ways to help Honduras. The idea gained momentum following Hurricane Mitch, which hit Central America in October 1998. As discussed in Chapter 2, Honduras was devastated by the hurricane, and across the United States Hondurans banded together to support their country, to raise money and to send donations. They rented warehouses, and trucks came and went with supplies from all over the country. Hundreds of Hondurans helped out, loading boxes and cooperating to address the crisis. During this time Marco also noted that many new websites were appearing, put up by Honduran organisations in order to raise money and gather resources, but following the immediate crisis he observed that most of the websites were no longer being updated. This confirmed to Marco that he was on to something with the website idea:

I said, 'we've got to create something that connects, that keeps all these people
together that have come together at one point, and at least keeps us
communicating, even if it's at a low level. So when there's another crisis we won't
have to restart everything we'll just move, and get things going' (Marco,
interview, 2008).

While Hurricane Mitch was the catalyst, and the aim was always humanitarian, at this point Marco and Paulina were particularly interested in building a business network. They aimed to connect Hondurans with business and professional skills, who they believed had the skills necessary to stimulate economic development in Honduras, as indicated in this 1999 press release:

WASHINGTON, May 19/PR Newswire/--projecthonduras.com today
announced the formation of its online business network, designed to facilitate

development and investment in Honduras. The network will use the Internet to
connect individuals, companies and organizations with business and
humanitarian interests in the country.

Over the years the focus of the network has changed and, as Chapter 8 will discuss, most
of the participants in the network are now North Americans with a humanitarian interest
in Honduras. However the interest in business remained, as this statement on the title
page of the 2005 conference programme states:

Supporting education, healthcare and community building projects.
Developing a strategic alliance between volunteer workers
and businesses in Honduras.

The origin and on-going business orientation of the network has considerable relevance
for the analysis of the promise and politics of projecthonduras, and will be discussed in
more depth in later chapters. The remainder of this chapter will chart the history and
evolution of the projecthonduras model, through four stages of development; and will
then describe the aims and objectives, and the organisation and structure of the network.

Stage 1: The Website

The first stage in the development of projecthonduras.com was the launch of the website
which was created over Christmas, 1998. Marco had no background in web design but
taught himself how to create websites using free software and templates borrowed from
other websites. He called it projecthonduras.com:

...like Amazon calls itself Amazon.com. Instead of calling myself
projecthonduras corp or projecthonduras Inc., it's projecthonduras.com. It's not a
corporation, it's not incorporated, it is not anything except a website. (Marco,
interview, 2008)

The idea was to get people to go to the website to get ideas and to see who else is doing
work in Honduras in order to connect with them. As one of the participants in the
network noted:

It's like a thing that it's updated (and) every day you'll see something new
happening. There's a lot of links that you can find there to find information about

your work of development… I see it like a big platform from where you can launch or be launched to serve. (Leopoldo, Honduran NGO director, interview, 2008)

The website is at the core of the projecthonduras, and although it has gone through several changes since it was first launched in 1998, it has remained the central point of reference for the network. The theme has also remained consistent. Rather than being bright and flashy and displaying a lot of information within the site itself, the layout of the page and the website seem designed to lead visitors to click on the links and move on to other pages in the site, to the network forums and on to the websites of organisations actually working in Honduras.

Figure 2: projecthonduras.com home page (screenshot)
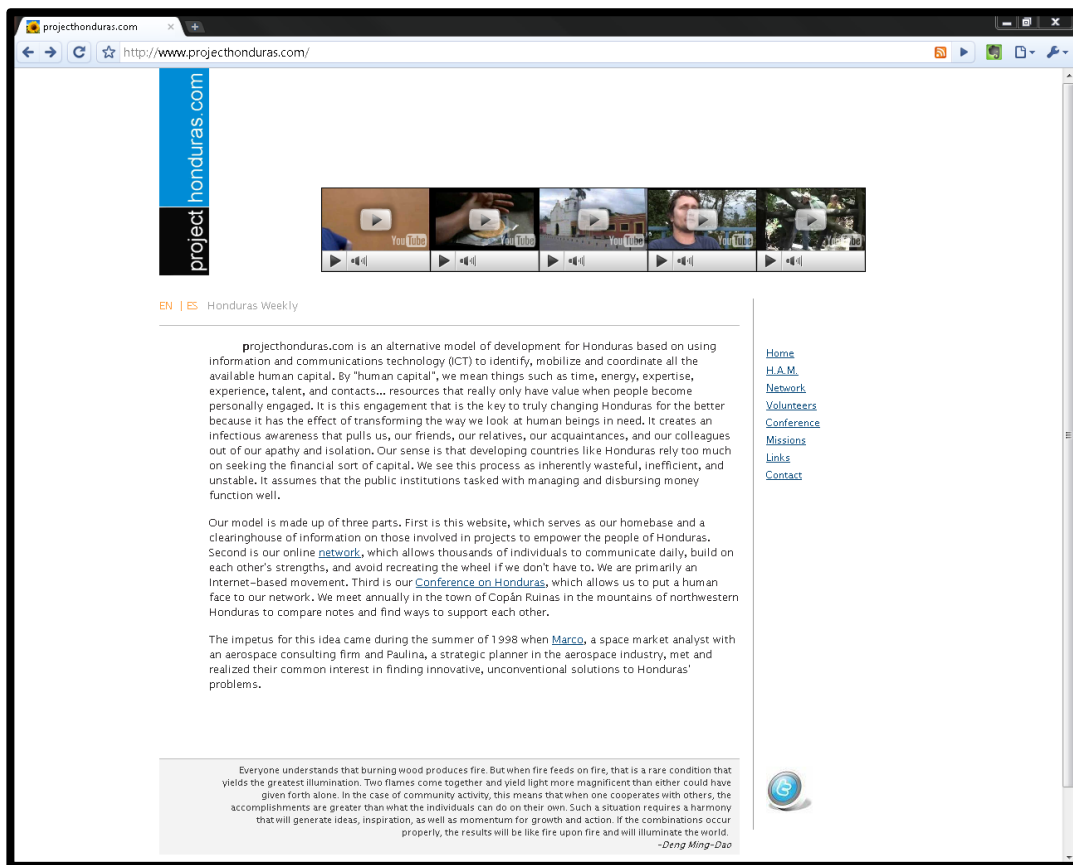
Retrieved from www.projecthonduras.com, 26 April 2010

Figure 2 shows the home page as it appeared in April 2010. This screenshot illustrates the key components of the website, most of which have been present in some way or another since the launch of the site. These include a simple blue and white design, an introduction to the idea of projecthonduras, embedded YouTube videos from organisations in

Honduras, and links to forums, the Honduras Aid Map (HAM) and conference information.

One of the most important tools on the website for connecting visitors with other organisations is the HAM (Figures 3 and 4). This page uses a Google map of Honduras to visually map the location of non-governmental organisations working in Honduras and to provide links back to organisational websites (as illustrated by Figure 4). The map is maintained by Marco, who creates a link to that organisation on the H.A.M. when he becomes aware of an organisation working in Honduras, or a mission or volunteer team planning a trip to Honduras. In the past the website has also utilised Google maps on the links page, which linked to private businesses, government websites and Honduran newspapers.

Figure 3: Honduras Aid Map (screenshot)

Retrieved from http://projecthonduras.com/ham/, 24 Feb. 2011

Figure 4: Copán Ruinas links from HAM (screenshot)
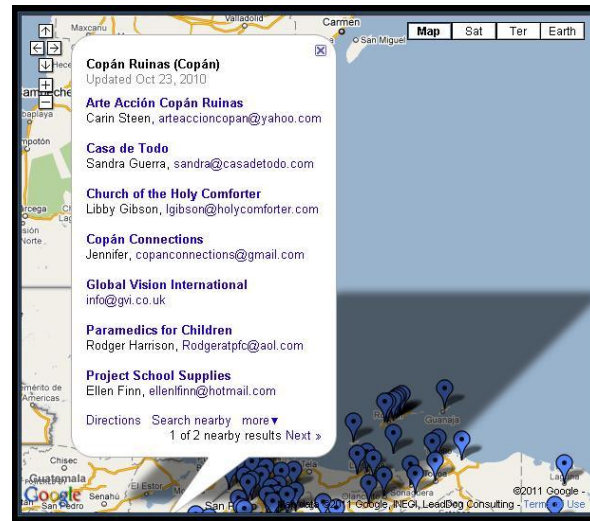
Retrieved from http://projecthonduras.com/ham/, 24 Feb. 2011.

The Conference on Honduras has its own page, which is updated throughout the year leading up to the conference. It has the conference dates and information about the location (Copán Ruinas), sponsor (SMF[54]) and local contact (at the Casa de Todo tourist shop). A column on the right has links to payment options, speaker guidelines, more information about Copán Ruinas and about past conferences, and a list of confirmed

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[54] Special Missions Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)3 organisation which serves as a facilitator for those who wish to support projects in Honduras but require an umbrella legal structure to transfer funds and provide the necessary accounting (http://www.specialmissions.org).

conferees. This list of confirmed conferees is updated throughout the year, and states the location, organisational affiliation and email address of each conferee. This is provided so that conferees can begin networking prior to the conference, both for general purposes (finding organisations working in the same area, for example) and for conference purposes (such as becoming familiar with names or arranging transportation).

At various times the website has also hosted mission[55] lists and volunteer recruitment pages, short essays written by Marco and others and spreadsheets tracking many of the groups that were going to Honduras and aid money to Honduras. At the time of writing many of these have been removed from the website as the network shifted focus or because they were very time-intensive to maintain.

Stage 2: The Forums

While the website is clearly the 'home base' of projecthonduras.com, it remains largely static, serving to point people in the direction of the organisations working in Honduras, and the forums that projecthonduras.com maintains for them to network. These forums are the lifeblood of the network, a vehicle for communicating, and were the second stage in the development of projecthonduras.com.

The forums started life as a list in Marco's Microsoft Outlook program. As Marco made contacts, he added them to the list. From there he was able to send and forward emails to a growing number of individuals and groups. The problem came when the group grew to the hundreds, and reached the limit of Outlook's ability:

> *The limitation was that you had to input all that stuff by hand, and also, that you*
> *could only grow your lists on your Outlook book so long, so when you got to 2, 3,*
> *400 and I tried to send a message... it would say you cannot do this, it's too much.*
> *Either it looks like you are spamming, or you just cannot do this. (Marco,*
> *interview, 2008)*

Through a friend Marco was soon introduced to the idea of e-groups. Transferring the projecthonduras.com email list to e-groups and then eventually to Yahoo groups not only freed Marco from manually entering email addresses and allowed individuals to add

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[55] In this context 'missions' is used in to refer to groups undertaking short term work outside their home country. While many of these groups in Honduras are religiously based, the term missions does not necessarily refer to exclusively religious groups only, but to all groups undertaking such work trips.

themselves to the list, it provided a means for individuals to post directly to the list and therefore to communicate without a mediator.

> *I started creating... those e-groups.... then e-groups was bought by yahoo groups.*
> *So we became Yahoo groups' forums. Low tech, off the shelf, it works. I didn't*
> *have money to set up my own forums. Why should I? The only danger there was*
> *that yahoo groups disappear and I lose everything... But it will probably be there*
> *for a long time so I'm not going to worry about it. (Marco, interview, 2008)*

Over the next few years Marco created fourteen Yahoo groups, ranging in focus from education and healthcare, to the environment, tourism and business support. The largest of these groups had hundreds of members, and at their peak, over a hundred messages each month (the change in the number of messages is discussed in Chapter 7). However, while the groups provide public forum for networking, Marco persists with doing a lot of networking himself. There continues to be a tendency for people to email Marco directly, and while many emails are forwarded to the appropriate group, often Marco will send the email directly to people that he knows. These messages are often framed with an introduction or comment from Marco.

The online networking aspect of projecthonduras.com was limited to the website, email and online forums for nearly a decade. Then, in early 2008, Marco was introduced to Facebook, by Chris, a US American social entrepreneur and network participant, who explains:

> *I suggested to Marco the transition to Facebook... when we were talking about it*
> *he said I've been thinking about that... tell me more... And that's natural, because*
> *I'm younger, it's more my generation that's on it. So I just told him that this*
> *would be a great way to do it. It's more Web 2.0; it's more the way of current*
> *actuality. So that was a catalyst for him to go and sign up for Facebook, and*
> *eventually he made the decision, 'yeah I think we should transition to that'.*
> *(interview, 2008)*

In early 2008 Marco began to transition all the Yahoo forums to Facebook, first launching the Facebook groups, then gradually closing the Yahoo forums to new posts. He soon encountered some problems as many projecthonduras.com contacts were not Facebook users and many were unable or unwilling to change. By mid-2008, these issues led Marco

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to reinstate the Yahoo groups as the primary networking tool for projecthonduras.com. Although at the time of writing the Facebook group[56] was still occasionally active, for much of 2009 and 2010 the link on the projecthonduras website was directed to Marco's personal Facebook page rather than the group page; a structural issue that had significant implications for the network during the 2009 coup (see Chapter 10).

In early 2009 Marco also launched a projecthonduras profile on Twitter. The profile has remained active but not heavily utilised – Marco does not follow anyone else, and by November 2010 had only 207 tweets and 124 followers. Most tweets were simple information posts such as conference attendees or links to relevant videos, with few, if any, conversational tweets.

Stage 3: The Conference

The third step in the development of projecthonduras.com was the conference.

> *At this point I realised, (at) the end of 1999, that... we really have to know who we are on a personal basis. So while you can communicate by email you can only get to know each other so well. So to start distilling some sense of spirit and group identity we decided to have a conference. (Marco, interview, 2008)*

Planning for the first 'Conference on Honduras' started in March 2000; and the conference was held in Washington DC in late October of that year. Marco and his wife Barbara sent out written invitations, and about 100 people attended. Most attendees were from US nationals, although a few Honduran-based North Americans and some Hondurans from the Washington DC area also attended. Because projecthonduras.com did not have any legal status, it was sponsored by another organisation with an interest in Central America and in networking; the Special Missions Foundation (SMF)[57]. This support both enabled the physical organisation and financial management of the conference.

In order to help decide on a conference theme Marco designed an online quiz; however the results were not exactly in line with what the planning group wanted the conference to be:

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[56] http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=9274157634
[57] See footnote 54.

What are our themes? I said we have to have education. First what I did was I put out a quiz. There's a company called quizlet, you can design a quiz online, ask questions and people come in and... Well the question that I asked was 'which of the following issues or problems do you think need to, are the most important to be addressed in order for Honduras to progress, to move ahead'?

So I put in things like machismo, economic diversification, healthcare, education, corruption, and by far 70% or more of the people marked corruption. And so I thought, well that's interesting. They wouldn't put things that I thought were the most obvious. And so I thought, all right, it's interesting but it's not going to help me determine what I want the conference to be. So I think, with Sandra R. (of SMF) and with a few other people we talked about it and you know, clearly education, clearly healthcare. So I think at least for the first 2 or 3 years they (health, education and community development) were really our three main themes. (Marco, interview, 2008)

This quote is very revealing in regards to decision-making within the network, and the focus of the network leaders. These issues will be explored in later chapters.

The conference grew over the next few years, and up to 150 people attended each of the three Washington conferences. But while they started to get Hondurans living in New York, New Jersey, Miami and other US locations to attend the conference, it soon became clear that despite the original intent to network Honduran professionals, most participants were US American. The organisers felt that they still weren't attracting enough Hondurans, and to address this they began to think about moving the conference to Honduras. In March 2003 Marco made a trip to Honduras, and during that trip he visited the town of Copán Ruinas.

We settled on Copán, because the big cities would be too difficult and we wanted to be charming and small... and so I took a trip in March of 2003 and I looked at the town for the first time. Immediately I got good energy from it and I met with Sandra and Carin and Flavia and they took me to a restaurant and they said 'bring the conference here. We will help you do it'. (Marco, interview, 2008)

From this visit the conference support team evolved; Sandra G. and Flavia, both local businesswomen, and Carin, an expatriate running a small NGO in Copán.

> *It happened that... they didn't have the experience organising events here. So we*
> *started emailing each other until (Marco) came to Copán then we were able to talk*
> *and discuss more about what was he expecting and those kind of things, but*
> *basically we met by the Internet... I kind of followed my instincts and decided to*
> *get involved and since that year... I became basically part of the team... (Sandra*
> *G., interview, 2008)*

While there was initially some discussion about keeping the conference informal and casual, the conference in Washington had had a very elegant and professional ambience and the consensus was to keep it that way. Sandra G. soon took the lead in organising the logistics of the conference, which continued to maintain that professional tone, with conference delegates seated at round tables covered with crisp white tablecloths and large arrangements of tropical flowers on the podium and at the entrance (see Photograph 1).

Photograph 1: Conference on Honduras 2008, Copán Ruinas, Honduras

The first conference in Copán was held in 2003, and about 275 people attended. Since then, the conferences have been held annually in Copán, with 200-300 attendees. While there was some discussion in the first few years about whether or not to stay in Copán, it

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soon become clear, as illustrated in this quote, that Copán was the home base for the conference.

> *Now the question was, were we going to stay in Copán or were we going to move around Honduras? And just every year it became easier, because Sandra G. was here. So we kept on having the conference, and now we are up to six, and the idea was that we really need to have a home base, a physical home base for projecthonduras, in Honduras. And so Copán became the de facto home base for Honduras project as well as the conference. (Marco, interview, 2008)*

The conference has now become an institution in the town. It is deliberately held in the tourism off-season in order to bring business to the town at an otherwise quiet time of year, as well as to ensure the availability of accommodation in a small town. Marco states that it is run on a business model, with themed panels of speakers. The speakers are largely recruited through the projecthonduras.com network. Each year Marco sends out call for presenters to those in the network, and each year he is able to fill several panels over three days. Panel themes range from the practical (water, HIV/AIDs care, community building, volunteering) to the more theoretical (sustainability, partnerships), although with Marco's encouragement most presenters focus on talking about their organisation or project – where they work, what they do, and what their plans are.

Over the years the conference has had some high-profile attendees. Each year Marco sends invitations to the President of Honduras and key figures in the government. Until 2009 he had rarely had a response, although in 2005 Honduran President Maduro's daughters attended the conference and gave a presentation outlining a project they were involved in. In 2009 the Minister of Tourism in Micheletti's post-coup interim government agreed to attend, although her attendance was cancelled in the crisis following Zelaya's return to Tegucigalpa. In 2010 Honduran President Porfirio Lobo attended the final day of the conference, and committed to attending in 2011.

Marco also regularly invites US government and military representatives. In 2007 officials from the Medical Element (MEDEL) of Joint Task Force Bravo (JTF-B), under US Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) attended the conference. In 2008 JTF-B financially sponsored the conference, which was also attended by Hugo Llorens, the new US Ambassador to Honduras. Llorens was accompanied by an entourage that included representatives from

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the embassy and from USAID. While Llorens only attended the first day, he continued to show an interest in the network and in the work of the organisations within it, and committed to attending the 2009 conference, during which USAID also offered to run a workshop for NGOs about partnering with USAID in Honduras. That panel, and Llorens' attendance, was cancelled when the USAID contingent was unable to attend due to the 2009 coup d'état and resulting political tension; a situation that had considerable impact on the conference and the network. In 2010 the conference was sponsored by the US Embassy and Llorens attended, along with William Brands, USAID Mission Director for Honduras.

Despite the professional tone of the conference, and the occasional presence of high profile individuals, the conference has a relaxed pace designed to encourage networking. Short presentations are followed by often-prolonged question times in order to promote interaction. Coffee breaks are frequent and lunches long so that conferees can spend time talking, sharing information and business cards and generally networking.

Stage 4: Honduras Weekly

For nearly a decade the website, forums and conference were the key components or networking tools for projecthonduras. This changed in 2009 when the *Honduras Weekly* website was launched and, according to Marco, became the fourth stage in the evolution of projecthonduras:

> *But it's going to be much more of a partnership (between projecthonduras and Honduras Weekly)... (we) get a lot more people visiting the newspaper (Honduras Weekly) than we would ever have visiting the projecthonduras website. The goal is to make Honduras Weekly the PR arm of projecthonduras, so it's kind of the fourth step in the strategy. (Marco, Skype interview, 2010)*

Honduras Weekly is described as:

> *… a privately owned, independent Honduran newspaper without government connections (national or foreign) and solely responsible to its readers. It is updated daily in English, with an emphasis on those stories that have the greatest overall impact on Honduras each week. (Honduras Weekly, 2011)*

Projecthonduras is so much more than just the website. It now includes lots of
activity on Facebook and Honduras Weekly as well as all the yahoo groups and the
conferences. (Ben, US American school director, email interview, 2009)

Honduras Weekly is the successor to *Honduras This Week* (*HTW*), which was an English language newspaper and website, founded and edited by Honduran entrepreneur Mario Gutierrez Pacheco. The website itself was owned by Texan businessman Stanley Marrder. Marco was a frequent contributor to *Honduras This Week*, writing regular a column on volunteering. According to Marco, in 2009 Marrder asked him to become more involved in *HTW* in order to generate more copy for the website as the newspaper had "kind of" gone out of business, a move which led to him taking on the role of editor for *Honduras Weekly*:

It's been an evolution... HTW kind of went out of business; they stopped printing
its paper version. So eventually there was no more copy being sent for the online
website, and that point the guy that owns the website (Stanley Marrder) asked me
to come on board to see if I could help him find some reporters and create more
copy for the newspapers since he wasn't getting it from HTW. So I came on board
and started writing, and then we collaborated and the more I wrote it was clear
that I was going to be the editor, and so then we decided to rename and re-launch
it as another newspaper because we didn't really own the rights to the name
Honduras This Week. (Marco, Skype interview, 2010)

While Marco's account seems quite straightforward, his comment regarding the renaming of *HTW* hints at a conflict below the surface. Stanley Marrder could not use the name *Honduras This Week* as it is owned by the founder Mario Gutierrez. A more detailed account of the origins of *Honduras Weekly* by a former employee of *HTW* reveals the roots of the change:

As time went on, it became clear that (Honduras This Week manager and editor)
Andrea and Mario (Gutierrez) were being shut out of having any kind of say over
what went on the website or how it was presented. Traditionally, according to a
gentleman's agreement struck between Don Mario Gutierrez (Mario and
Andrea's father & founder of Honduras This Week) and Stanley Marrder, the
Gutierrezes would provide content and retain complete editorial control while the

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Marrders provided the website purely as hosts. After Zelaya was overthrown, the Marrders increasingly started uploading articles to the website which Mario and Andrea knew nothing about. Andrea would sit in the HTW office seeing new pieces appear on the website which she knew nothing about.

A few weeks later we discovered that the Marrders had actually hired their own editor, Marco Cáceres, without consulting the Gutierrezes in any way. Marco was known to Andrea and Mario because he had written a regular column for HTW on volunteering ... (Rachel Fitch, former journalist for Honduras This Week, personal communication, 2010).

Rachel alleges that following the coup Marco and Stanley Marrder, both pro-coup, conspired to shut the Gutierrezes out of the publication, withholding passwords for the website and editing articles before posting them online:

...we would watch as headlines were changed and introductions re-written, sometimes significantly shifting the tone or meaning.

Eventually the Marrders re-launched the website as *Honduras Weekly*, allegedly without the knowledge of the Gutierrezes and *Honduras This Week* staff, and with Marco at the helm as editor:

...As time went on it became clear that the Marrders' wanted to break away completely and launch their own rival news website, Honduras Weekly... We found out second-hand that the Marrders had held a launch party, where some of them flew in to Tegucigalpa from the States, via one of the guests who attended.

While this disputed history may not seem immediately relevant to projecthonduras, the origins of the *Honduras Weekly* and Marco's role within it are also essential to the discussion of the politics of projecthonduras and the case study of the coup in Chapter 10. At this point it is important to note that since the launch, *Honduras Weekly* has taken an increasingly prominent role in the projecthonduras network, and that Marco envisages that the role will increase:

One of our biggest weaknesses has been exposure, for the past 10 years, and Honduras This Week used to give us a lot of coverage... but now as the editor of Honduras Weekly... I have full rein of the newspaper so you're going to start

seeing how it starts to look a little bit more like a partner of projecthonduras, even
the look is starting to look a little more like projecthonduras... and if you look at
the causes section I'm trying to fill that in to include as many listings of
non-profits organisations in Honduras... it's stuff that I've been thinking of doing
within the projecthonduras website... we just get a lot more people visiting the
newspaper than we would ever have visiting the projecthonduras website.
(Marco, Skype Interview, 2010)

Indeed by late 2010, a year after the launch, the *Honduras Weekly* website had multiple links to projecthonduras. It hosts lists of NGOs in Honduras, forums for discussion and essays on volunteering in Honduras; much like projecthonduras had in the past. PR-type articles promoting the network and the conference are featured frequently. *Honduras Weekly* also became a sponsor of the annual conference on Copán:

Honduras Weekly is proud to be an official co-sponsor of the 12th annual
Conference on Honduras planned for October 6-8, 2011 in the town of Copán
Ruinas. As part of our contribution, we will donate 100 per cent of the proceeds
from the sale of advertising on our site to conference organizer
projecthonduras.com to help offset the costs of staging the event.(Honduras
Weekly, 2011)

Interestingly, in late 2010 the projecthonduras.com website was updated, and considerably simplified. Many of the pages were dropped, retaining only the conference, HAM and forum link pages. No explicit link has been made between this and *Honduras Weekly*, but it does seem clear that the role of *Honduras Weekly* is not merely complimentary to projecthonduras but as a larger forum with a wider readership, it may be replacing some of the networking activity of projecthonduras.com.

Aim and Objectives of the network

Everyone understands that burning wood produces fire. But when fire feeds on
fire, that is a rare condition that yields the greatest illumination. Two flames come
together and yield light more magnificent than either could have given forth
alone. In the case of community activity, this means that when one cooperates
with others, the accomplishments are greater than what the individuals can do on

their own. Such a situation requires a harmony that will generate ideas,

inspiration, as well as momentum for growth and action. If the combinations

occur properly, the results will be like fire upon fire and will illuminate the world.

(Quote attributed to Deng Ming-Dao)

This quote from Deng Ming-Dao was displayed on the projecthonduras website from 2008-2010, and encapsulates Marco's grand vision for the network. Co-founder Paulina puts it more prosaically:

I would describe projecthonduras.com as a virtual network that links people with

an interest in the socioeconomic development of Honduras and maximizes our

collective abilities towards that goal. (Paulina, email interview, 2009)

Despite this projecthonduras has not published formal goals and objectives. Marco hopes that the network will grow organically, somewhat like Ming-Dao's idea of fire feeding on fire:

My assumption also is that what we're doing is so unique and exciting that word

will get around, and that when people are ready they will visit our site and

subscribe to one or more of the forums. All we have to do is remain consistent in

what we're doing and keep close to our philosophy (of) being positive,

constructive, and creative... and never ever accepting it when someone says "Oh,

this cannot be done". This is pretty cool stuff we're espousing. Hell, I think we're

making history. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2006a)

While Marco clearly has a big vision for the network, he is less clear about specific goals, and the website and projecthonduras forums do not outline the aims of projecthonduras in detail. However in 2008 projecthonduras entered the Stockholm Challenge[58]. As part of the entry for this competition Marco had to provide written objectives and goals. These goals appear to be the only public description of the goals of projecthonduras, although they are not linked to on the website or forums, indeed it seems they were produced

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[58] The Stockholm Challenge is an award for ICT and networking organisations with which aims to "help counteract social and economic disadvantage, wherever it occurs, by promoting the use of ICT for development", and is hosted and owned by The Royal institute of Technology, Stockholm, in cooperation with the City of Stockholm, Ericsson and Sida (Stockholm Challenge, 2010). It is one of two international competitions projecthonduras has entered. The other is the Petersberg prize, sponsored by the Development Gateway Foundation, in which it was a finalist

solely for the competition rather than for any strategic goal or evaluative function within the network itself. The objectives were identified as:

- *identify those in civil society, both inside and outside Honduras, who are working for the empowerment of Hondurans and for the benefit of Honduras*

- *support civil society efforts in their existing development work by connecting them to others so they can form partnerships, have access to better information, and work more effectively and collaboratively*

- *attract, inspire and maintain individuals or organizations interested in working in development projects in Honduras*

- *provide a means for disparate groups who may be working toward the same goal (i.e. clean water or maternal-fetal health) to communicate, organize, strategize and mobilize in a more comprehensive and/or effective manner. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2004)*

In the Stockholm Challenge documents Marco also identified three goals:

- *Interactive Website - To develop an interactive website that could serve as a clearinghouse for information and as a way to track the activities of groups doing development work in Honduras.*

- *Online Forums - To provide interactive online communities organized around common interests where people could communicate, exchange ideas, request assistance, and share information.*

- *Networking Conference - to bring people working for the betterment of Honduras together face-to-face to share their projects, ideas, successes and failures, and to seek new ways to work together to solve Honduras' problems. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2004)*

As part of the Stockholm Challenge process Marco had to outline progress on these goals, which he believed had been met:

> *The website (www.projecthonduras.com) is home for the "Honduras Aid Map (HAM)" ... the "Calendar"... the "Funds" section..., the "Conference"*

section... the "Forums" section... and finally, "Writings".... The website gets
approximately 60,000 hits each year.

There are currently 16 listserv forums...

The annual Conference on Honduras, held in October for eight consecutive years
and attended by over 1,600 people representing 750 different organizations,
encourages attendees to use the power of personal relationships formed at these
conferences to develop new partnerships and to help groups work more effectively
and collaboratively... (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2004)

It is clear from the discussion in the first part of this chapter that these concrete goals have
been met –the website and forums had been online and active for nearly a decade when
this summary was written. However there is little other measureable or quantifiable data
regarding the success of the network, in part because of the loose structure of the network,
but also due to Marco's preference to look to the future rather than to dwell on the past,
and his aversion to taking 'precious time' to write reports.

Despite this Marco did have to outline future goals for the network in the course of the
Stockholm Challenge application:

Projecthonduras.com has identified four goals that will further enhance our
ability to identify, channel, mobilize and support organizations engaged in
development work in Honduras:

- *Although we currently have about 6,000 people in our worldwide Honduras*
  network, we believe we have only identified a fraction of the people and
  organizations working to help Honduras. We will continue working to
  identify all the groups and organizations working within the country and to
  grow our network.

- *To date, this project has been a voluntary "labor of love" by founder Marco*
  Cáceres and others. We will seek to develop funding sources for the purpose
  of compensation and program development.

- *The Conference on Honduras has unquestionably been a success. The*
  majority of participants are North American, which is reflective of the
  organizations doing development work in Honduras. Obstacles to greater

> *Honduran participation are both financial and cultural. We would like to increase Honduran participation in the Conference ...*

- *Projecthonduras.com has developed several important working partnerships... We would like to continue to build on these partnerships and to find ways to work collaboratively with other organizations to expand the range of services we can provide to our network. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2004)*

Progress on these goals and on the objectives outlined at the beginning of the Stockholm Challenge document is less clear than that of the more concrete goals of setting up the online network and conferences. The extent to which these goals and objectives have been met will be discussed in later chapters of this thesis.

While this very visionary approach has been somewhat successful, with the network growing steadily in the first few years and still operating after more than ten years, the lack of clear published objectives and the vague nature of the grander goal of being an alternative model were flagged by one research participant:

> *It's fine, but then when he takes it to this next level of a new model that's when the development professionals are kind of like ok, what is this model. I mean it's great, and networking obviously is the way to go, and it's the way of the present and the future but what exactly does he mean by that... what the heck is this model of development because if you don't know what it is, cannot describe it, you don't know what its objectives really are... then you cannot evaluate it. You can say it's done all these nice things anecdotally, but you cannot really say it achieved any of its objectives (Jackie, US American development professional, interview, 2009)*

As a development professional, Jackie was concerned that without clear objectives projecthonduras could not be monitored or evaluated, making it difficult to judge the true impact of the network. While she was unaware that Marco had taken the time to write objectives for the Stockholm Challenge, these were clearly written with the competition in mind rather than for evaluative purposes. There is no evidence that Marco has attempted to evaluate projecthonduras based on the Stockholm objectives, and as noted above they have not been publically published on the projecthonduras.com website or forums.

Despite this, the lack of published objectives did not appear to be a concern for most in the network. It did however present some problems in researching projecthonduras.com. Not

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having access to the Stockholm objectives early in the research made it very difficult to take an evaluative approach to the research, although it reinforced the benefit of an ethnographic approach and the explorative nature of the early research.

Organisation and Structure

The explorative, ethnographic approach was particularly important during the early phases of the research, in discerning the organisation and structure of the projecthonduras network. Corresponding with the lack of official objectives, projecthonduras has no formalised structure or membership system; it is deliberately designed as a non-hierarchical, informal network. Despite this, the network does have a clear leadership and organisational structure, which will be outlined in this section.

Leadership & Support Team

As the network is designed to be non-hierarchical there is no director or formal leadership team, although the network is very clearly centred on Marco. Although he founded the network with Paulina, and has had some assistance from time to time he remains primarily responsible for the day to day running of the website and forums, and for overseeing the conference planning.

Marco's role will be discussed later in this chapter; at this point it is important to note that although he eschews the term director, preferring to see himself as simply a conduit or facilitator, Marco is the de facto manager and director of the network. However, while he remains in charge, no leader works completely alone and Marco has a team of people who assist with the network. In keeping with the informal nature of the network there is not a formalised leadership structure, rather the leadership consists of clear core of participants whose role is to support Marco and assist with various functions within the network.

Marco's wife Barbara is an important part of this team. As well as supporting Marco personally and encouraging him (and tolerating the long hours he works), she assists with organising the conferences.

Sandra G. is also a vital part of the support team, and is often considered the representative of projecthonduras within Honduras. Sandra G. is a Copáneca[59] businesswoman who, as noted earlier, handles most of the logistics of organising the conference.

Another important person in the support team was Sandra R. Sandra and her husband are the directors of SMF, the sponsors of the conference (see finances and sponsorship below), and Sandra R. played a prominent role in both the organisation of the conference and during the conference herself where she frequently emcees with Marco. Due to other commitments her role decreased over the course of the research.

At varying times others have played differing roles in the network, including Leopoldo who has done significant work on translating the website into Spanish, and marketing the network within Honduras; and co-founder Paulina, who has not taken an active role in the network for many years. In addition in 2009 Marco formed what he called the marketing team, a group of mostly women based in the US, Honduras and Spain who were to contributes to the marketing of the conference both by assisting with formal invitations and promotion through their own social networks. While the actual work undertaken by this team was limited (and none responded to my invitations to meet me in Tegucigalpa discuss their role), they did assist with sending letters and making contacts, and their names and contact details were on the website for over a year.

Operations

As noted, projecthonduras.com has no formal structure, and as such no employees or office space. Marco operates the online network from his computer at home, putting in hours each evening after he has completed his day job. Conference organisation is undertaken by email and Skype, with one visit to Copán Ruinas a few months before each conference.

Almost all day to day operations are carried out by Marco, who is the webmaster for www.projecthonduras.com and the moderator for all the forums. Marco is by far the most

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[59] Copeneco / Copáneca is the term used to refer to natives of Copán Ruinas.

prominent poster to the forums, posting both his own writing and the requests for assistance and advice from others who have emailed him directly.

The network has no formal membership or procedure for joining. The conference and all information on the website are open to all. The forums are a little more select, and prospective list members are asked to provide a brief summary of their interest in Honduras for the moderator (Marco) as a means of ensuring the list remains focused on Honduras.

Finances and Sponsorship

Because projecthonduras has no formal structure it also does not have a budget or income, but it also has almost no overheads. The most significant financial cost for the online network is the small amount Marco pays from his own pocket for webhosting. The other tools used by the network – email, yahoo forums and Facebook are free of charge. Most other requirements, including translation and marketing assistance, are provided by volunteers.

The conference however is not free of charge and as an organised event requires financial and operational management. Marco states that over 90% of the conference fee comes from the registration fee, which covers two fully catered meals, coffee and tea, snacks, the conference reception, conference materials and headset hire (for simultaneous translation). The remaining funding for the conference comes from outside sponsorship, including significant sponsorship from Joint Task Force Bravo, the US military humanitarian wing stationed in Honduras in 2008; and in 2010 sponsorship was obtained from USAID in Honduras and from *Honduras Weekly*. As projecthonduras has no legal structure the funds for the conference are managed by SMF, who also provide the structure for organisational necessities such as contracting for the venue and catering.

Marco

Before concluding this chapter, it is pertinent here to discuss the centre of the projecthonduras network, Marco Cáceres. As founder and moderator of the online network, Marco continues to have a strong influence over the underlying philosophy and

structure and the day-to-day management of the network, and can be considered the glue that holds the network together:

> *Projecthonduras is Marco Cáceres. It works because he spends many many hours per day just to make projecthonduras work. It is true that it is a cyber-whatever network that works over the Internet, but there is one person actually managing and pushing for that network to work and I think that's the most valuable thing of the projecthonduras because you will always get an answer from Marco. So it seems like projecthonduras is a huge network but it's managed by one single person. (Sandra G, Honduran businesswoman and conference organiser, interview, 2008)*

> *Like most non-profits it takes a very dedicated individual to do it. It's not like his website is the most flashiest or the most newest gadgets on it or anything. That's not what's going to make a difference. It's about Marco spending that time to make it work, and to answer emails and being there for people and obviously organising the conference takes a tremendous amount of work. So I think it's one man's dedication to try and do something about Honduras... he's amazing... (Tim[60], US American NGO co-director, interview, 2009)*

A quick review of this chapter to this point reveals just how central Marco remains within the network as the founder, webmaster and moderator of the online forums, and the conference organiser. He established the structure and (as the next chapter will discuss) defines the philosophy. Marco acknowledged this centrality in response to a question on the structure of the network at the conference on Honduras in 2009:

> *Right now I am the centre (of the projecthonduras network)... I'm the guy with the microphone, I'm the guy with the website, I'm the guy with the website skills. I'm the guy with the biggest Facebook profile, 2500 Hondurans. So I am really the centre for practical purposes. Now the goal here is to find a way to inspire each one of you to develop your own networks. I'm the centre of the projecthonduras network.... But you can go off and then create your own little network within that network... and each time you get involved in putting energy out there you start making your own sub-network. (Marco, Conference on Honduras, 2009)*

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[60] Pseudonym

This somewhat defensive comment was unusual for Marco, who normally presents a calm façade, however it does hint at some issues regarding the control of the network. It is not the intention of this thesis to examine Marco's personality, but what is clear from this and from other information discussed later in this thesis is that Marco retains a firm command over the running of projecthonduras.

As the centre of the network Marco is able to control the network, both practically as most communication within the public network flows through him, and philosophically by defining the topics for dialogue, and limiting unrelated or potentially divisive conversation.

Marco's practical role in facilitating communication is clear in the following comment, made at the same conference as the comment above regarding his position at the centre of the network:

> *If you look at me as that dot in the middle, then I kind of serve as a go-between between you and all of the other groups that are out there. So if you have a problem, I can refer you to a listserv which contains doctors, nurses, other health care professionals and I can get an answer for you and I might be able to get some resources for you. I can do that with regard to educators, I can do that with regard to Honduran youth, I can do that with regard to government reps, I have different tools... for example to get to the Honduran youth, the wealthy Honduran youth, they have money and the only thing they are lacking is a desire or a way to get involved, (to get to them) I use Facebook. I've got over 2500 Honduran youth, so I know where to go. To get to the healthcare professional I have we have a yahoo groups forum. And so I can relay your message to them. And this is the way the network works, but you've got to really use it. (Marco, Conference on Honduras, 2009)*

In this way Marco uses his position at the centre of the network to act as a go-between, or mediator. He has extensive contacts in Honduras and the USA and as a result participants in projecthonduras will often contact him directly rather than post the online forum. If he doesn't know who to pass the email to, Marco then posts the message himself, from his own email or account, often with an introductory comment such as these:

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Good evening everyone, I am forwarding to you a message from… Charles… of St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Charles and his group have been helping villagers in La Majada become self-sustainable. They have a project in mind that would provide for the acquisition of land for each of the villagers, but they want to ensure that the land not be sold at some future time. Does anyone have any experience with land tenure issues who might be able to develop a dialogue with Charles? If so, please e-mail Charles directly at... Thanks, Marco

Hi everyone,
We received a message from Rebecca…   advising us that there is a baby in Danli, Honduras that is in need of eye surgery. The baby's eyes do not focus on objects - estrabismo. If you know of a medical team or physicians who might be able to help, please contact Rebecca at …
Thanks, Marco

This re-framing of email message is one way in which Marco controls both the themes for discussion and the type of dialogue that can occur. Another clear example of this was is the way in which Marco selected the themes for the first conference, discussed earlier in the chapter. This quote from the website network page from 2001 is another example:

projecthonduras.com maintains an e-mail mailing list. The list is used for making announcements on a range of topics. We try, however, to limit these mailings to very specific business- and (or) aid-related needs, proposals.
(projecthonduras.com, 2001)

Marco clearly sees his role as a conduit of information:

And normally how projecthonduras works is you see, I send out an email, or somebody might see an email and forward it, I tweak it a little bit and say, from Marco, to the network... and this is an email I received, can anybody help out. That's the simple thing... it takes all of 5 minutes, and then eventually, in many cases, not all, people start responding either to me or to the person who sent the email... I usually encourage people to email directly so that I'm out of the loop. I did my part. And that's all I am, I'm just a conduit for getting information out there, to see what happens, putting energy out there. (Marco, interview, 2008)

Although the role of a facilitator is an important one in a network, in this context it often appears to be taken a step further. Although much of the time he does simply pass information along, he also often adds commentary, 'tweaking' the message. This may just be to make it clearer or it may be to focus it. This is particularly evident at the conferences when Marco usually takes the microphone after a speaker and adds his own interpretation of the presentation, often trying to tie the speaker's remarks to the network philosophy and broader ideas of development. Noting this at the 2009 conference, one observer commented that he was essentially "re-framing" each presentation. I experienced this as I presented my research proposal at the conference in 2008, and my early results in 2009. Each time Marco spoke for several minutes afterwards, highlighting the aspects of my research that were relevant to his agenda, and re-focusing the audience on the goals of the network itself.

Through his control of the conversation on the network Marco has been able to create a calm, inclusive façade, and to make possible connections that may not otherwise have occurred, but this control also creates a somewhat artificial bubble and serves to further limit participation:

> *Marco makes it work.... his spiritual, unselfish vision and mission. And everyone that surrounds him. If they don't have that same spirit and vision they don't fit, they quit. (Flavia, Honduran businesswoman & friend of Marco, interview, 2009)*

The impact of Marcos personal philosophy on the network, and the politics it reflects and reinforces, will be returned to, and discussed in more depth, at various points in this thesis.

Summary

Marco is very clearly the heart of the projecthonduras network, which he co-founded and has led for over a decade. Under Marco's leadership the network appears to have gone from strength to strength, from a list his email programme to a network of thousands, one that has caught the attention of both US American and Honduran government agencies. This chapter has outlined that history, and discussed the goals and objectives of the network, highlighting the positive and promising nature of projecthonduras. However it

has also alluded to some issues of significance, particularly the lack of published goals that can be evaluated, and the reliance of the network on one individual. It has also alluded to the underlying philosophy of the network, which is hugely significant in determining the structure and direction of projecthonduras. While later chapters will discuss the outcomes of the projecthonduras model and will uncover the politics that underlie projecthonduras and some of the shadows that have fallen across it, the next chapter will continue the discussion of the projecthonduras model and philosophy, discussing in more depth the promise and potential that draws people to become personally engaged.

Chapter 6: Promise: The Philosophy of an Alternative Model

> *What projecthonduras is capable of doing is basically changing the entire social dynamic, without revolutionary trauma. (Ben, US American school director, interview, 2009)*

This quote from a long-time participant in the projecthonduras network seems incredibly audacious but as this chapter will show, it encapsulates the grand vision and promise of projecthonduras. The rhetoric of projecthonduras is undeniably positive and hopeful, based on a particularly inspirational philosophy and a discourse of possibility that is intended to draw people into becoming personally engaged both in Honduras and in the projecthonduras network.

This chapter outlines the guiding philosophy of projecthonduras, a philosophy of being apolitical, constructive and positive. This philosophy will be discussed in the first half of this chapter, as an understanding of this philosophy is essential to understanding both the nature of projecthonduras, and its outcomes and impacts. Also vital to understanding projecthonduras is defining the terms 'unconventional movement' and 'alternative development', terms which will be unpacked and discussed in the second half of this chapter, before finishing with a discussion of the potential and possibility many see in projecthonduras, as alluded to in the quote above.

It is important to note at this point that as with the previous chapter, this chapter is a description and discussion of the philosophy and model of projecthonduras as it has been described by the founders and participants of projecthonduras itself. In line with this appreciative inquiry approach outlined in Chapter 4, it therefore retains an optimistic and appreciative tone, reflecting the positive nature and upbeat energy of the network. Later chapters will return to the ideas raised here for fuller and more critical analysis.

The Philosophy of Projecthonduras

> *The philosophy is simple. It assumes that it is human nature to be negative and critical. It assumes that it is our nature to be argumentative and wary of our differences. And it assumes that it is natural for us to prefer to talk about the big*

issues outside one's realm of influence rather than physically get involved and
address the "do-able" stuff. If we are to stand a chance of making a real difference
in Honduras, we have to adopt a new way of thinking and acting toward one
another as a movement and as a society. (Marco, Facebook note, August 2009)

This quote from Marco's Facebook feed encapsulates the philosophy of projecthonduras, a philosophy which is fundamental to understanding the model and actions of the projecthonduras network. The philosophy, encapsulated in this quote and in numerous other posts and research data, is based on three pillars: apoliticism, constructivism and positivity. The first part of this chapter will examine each of these and how they work together to form a foundation for the network. This discussion will then form a basis from which to discuss the projecthonduras model.

Apoliticism

We agree to remain apolitical. (projecthonduras.com, 2010)

The first pillar of the projecthonduras philosophy is the idea of apoliticism. The Oxford English Dictionary defines apolitical as "*not interested in or concerned with politics*" ("Apolitical," 2011). Superficially at least, this definition appears to apply to projecthonduras as it is not affiliated with any political group and the network intentionally shuns political talk.

The decision to keep the network apolitical was a deliberate one, designed to ensure the network is non-divisive and non-threatening, in order to keep it open to as many people and organisations as possible, and to allow it to focus on the positive and constructive work being done in Honduras. As the next section on constructivism will highlight, the idea is to concentrate on areas where there is agreement and strength and avoid issues that are seen to be beyond the influence of the network:

I will not allow the Conference to be used to promote one political position over
another. To do so would certainly lead to discord at the Conference and would
damage the spirit of the event... and in the end nothing constructive or good
would come of it all .(Marco, Facebook note, August 2009)

This appears reasonable; without such a non-confrontational and apolitical facade, it is likely that many would not be interested or feel comfortable participating, as this Honduran participant noted:

> *...for me it is better to have a neutral position so anyone with different political affiliation can attend; neutral is very good. (Salvador[61], Honduran pastor, interview, 2009)*

This apolitical stance is a conscious decision, and it continues to be actively reinforced by Marco. There is no mention of political affiliations or political opinion on the projecthonduras.com website and it is rarely discussed in the Yahoo forums. Politics and political issues are not addressed within the conference programme. This includes discussion of political events including elections (other than direct practical impacts on the work of organisations), political issues such as corruption (despite the results of the survey quiz discussed in Chapter 5 which showed 70% of respondents felt this was an important issue) and political conflict, and discussion on policy issues.

While political discussion is clearly limited within the network, projecthonduras is not completely apolitical in the sense of the dictionary definition given at the beginning of this section. Within the network there is an acknowledgment that people are inherently political and that development is a political process:

> *It's hard to do that (keep the conference apolitical). I think he shouldn't use the word apolitical because we are always political, even when you decide not to think political, that's a political position. So we are always political, but we are not going to be forcing politics onto the people. (Leopoldo, Honduran NGO director, interview, 2009)*

Many within the network also have a strong interest in and concern with Honduran politics. This was particularly evident during and after the coup events of 2009, when private discussions of political events dominated the conference and spilled into online discussions. Indeed as Chapter 10 will discuss, far from being apolitical, projecthonduras arguably became highly politicised during and after the coup.

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[61] Pseudonym

That politicisation is also evident in the presence of powerful political figures at the conferences. As previously discussed, this has included the US Ambassador (2008 and 2010), US military representatives (2007, 2008 and 2010) and the President of Honduras (2010). However, somewhat paradoxically, this did not seem to be seen by most in projecthonduras as a political move, rather as simply connecting with people in political positions who also have an interest in helping Honduras, and who may be able to help projecthonduras itself, as these quotes indicate:

> *(The involvement of the US ambassador in the conference) was never thought with a political agenda. I know the ambassador personally and his idea was to come and help Americans... make it easier for Americans, so it was never a political agenda... it was promoted as a help... he committed himself months ago so it was clear it was (about US) AID facilitating (and) thanking Americans. (Flavia, Honduran businesswoman & friend of Marco, 2009)*

> *Now the next step is to really take advantage of our new alliances with the embassy and the military and find ways to kind of help each other because they are going to help us with exposure, maybe money, and we're going to help them with information. (Marco, interview, 2008)*

The participation of political figures in the conference on Honduras and their impact on the network will be discussed in more depth in Chapters 8 and 10. At this point it is important to note that although the intent was not political, the participation of political figures indicates that the projecthonduras network can perhaps best be described as non-partisan rather than as apolitical, something Marco himself has acknowledged since the 2009 coup:

> *We don't really support as a group, as a network, any political party so in that sense we are apolitical from a partisan politics standpoint; but obviously people in our network have their own political views, and occasionally they are going to express them. I don't think it is possible to be totally apolitical, but it's possible too not be partisan in one's political views, so we're not going to support a candidate, and we're not going to get involved in a campaign. (Marco, Skype interview, 2010)*

The apolitical approach is a deliberate one, designed to ensure an open and non-threatening environment, and evidence suggests that it does indeed achieve these aims for many, providing a safe, seemingly neutral space for people from a variety of different political backgrounds to network. However, this does not work for all, and it is an uncomfortable place for those who have strong political views, and for those who believe that poverty in Honduras is a political issue requiring a political solution. As a result these individuals and organisations are under-represented in projecthonduras. These issues will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Constructivism[62]

> *One of the guiding principles of projecthonduras.com is to remain positive,*
> *constructive and pragmatic... focusing mostly on those areas in which we can*
> *work together to make a difference in Honduras... It means that we opt not to*
> *become entangled in issues on which we clearly see we lack a common vision. It*
> *means that we choose not to deal with those problems that are beyond our abilities*
> *to directly affect. (Marco, Facebook note, August 2009)*

The second pillar of the philosophy of projecthonduras is the idea of being constructive. As the quote above indicates, this approach has two main implications for the network: it leads to a strengths-based focus, concentrating on the ways in which participants can make a positive and tangible difference in Honduras, and it means focusing on those actions that they are able to directly affect, avoiding issues beyond the control of the participants.

As a strength-based approach, the aim of having a philosophy of constructivism is to identify models of successful development practice in Honduras, and to build on these:

> *The aim is to present and exchange information on current and proposed*
> *grassroots projects to empower the people of Honduras. We want to figure out*
> *how to improve and expand these efforts, as well as inspire people to go out and*
> *get involved. (projecthonduras.com, 2009)*

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[62] Not to be confused with 'social constructionism', the theoretical basis of Appreciative Inquiry, discussed in Chapters 2 and 4. The use of the term here is drawn from the projecthonduras discourse, which makes frequent reference to being constructive.

The constructive approach mirrors some of the ideas of Asset Based Community Development (Cameron & Gibson, 2008; Mathie & Cunningham, 2011) and other strengths-based development approaches (M. Gray, 2002). This includes a focus on the things that are done well by participating organisations, and a commitment to building on these. This focus on constructive approaches to development is behind the networks emphasis on health, education and community development projects:

> *All the conferences have focused on education, healthcare, and community building, with the central purpose being to better understand the projects that are already underway and to find ways to complement efforts and learn from each other's successes and failures. (Marco, Facebook note, January 2009)*

> *(At the conference) we will compare notes on projects to improve access to good education, expand access to quality healthcare, and support the general empowerment of families and communities. We will take this information and the personal relationships we establish and find ways to build on what is already being done. (Marco, Facebook note, April 2009)*

This focus is based on the idea that health, education and community development are Honduras' core needs, and that the most constructive solution is to build on the work already being done to address these needs. In the quote following Marco states this quite clearly, contrasting it with his belief that governments do not have constructive solutions:

> *The solutions to Honduras' social and economic problems are already in place. The problem is that people are not looking in the right places because they are only looking toward government. While governments can play a positive role in facilitating the implementation of solutions, they are usually not the originators of the solutions. At the Conference on Honduras 2009... our central purpose will be to bring together a collection of organizations that are quietly at work implementing solutions to Honduras' core needs... education, healthcare and community building. With these core needs met, the people of Honduras can address any issues before them or overcome any problems. (Marco, Facebook note, August 2009).*

The constructive approach is clearly consistent with the apoliticism of the network. As indicated in the previous section, political issues are seen as beyond the influence of the

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network. This includes both partisan politics and political issues such as corruption. Political problems are believed to be not only beyond their influence, but to be divisive and negative, which leads to the third pillar of the projecthonduras.com network, positivity.

Positivity

> *The ultimate aim has been to better support the poor and underprivileged within Honduran society by empowering them through education, healthcare, and a variety of community building projects. And to do so in a positive spirit of compassion, harmony, and joy. (Marco, Facebook note, September 2009)*

Related closely to the idea of constructivism, the third pillar of the projecthonduras philosophy is positivity. In a 2008 forum post Marco called the idea of positivity the "philosophy of Opposite George", a reference to an episode in the popular nineties sitcom *Seinfeld*. In the episode, entitled "The Opposite", George Costanza decides that every decision he has ever made in his life has been wrong, and that his life is therefore the opposite of what it should be. He tells Jerry Seinfeld this, and Jerry convinces him that "if every instinct you have is wrong, then the opposite would have to be right". George then resolves to start doing the complete opposite of what he would do normally. He suddenly begins to experience good luck, getting a girlfriend, moving out of his parents' house, and even landing a job with the New York Yankees.

While Seinfeld may seem to be far removed from the work of projecthonduras, Marco uses it to highlight the idea that human nature is inherently critical and negative, and that the best results in life come from being positive and constructive. This is an idea encapsulated in the quote at the beginning of this chapter: "it is human nature to be negative and critical... to be argumentative and wary of our differences". Marco therefore argues that in order to make a difference in Honduras "we have to adopt a new way of thinking and acting toward one another".

While the intent of this philosophy is to maximise the potential of the network and to create a positive energy in the network, the pitfalls of a strong focus on positivity in the context of the difficulties faced by Honduras was highlighted by some participants:

He (Marco) is frequently too optimistic. I know it doesn't help to have a rank pessimist, but that's one of the things that I think the list serv lacks, and I don't think Marco really knows how difficult it is here, really doesn't know how totally corrupt it is. (David B, US American volunteer, interview, 2009)

...at what point at projecthonduras will that criticism be allowed. I think that we're so excited about the positive nature of what networking is but is it diluting how difficult it is in Honduras, the lives for the Hondurans. (Cosmo, US American NGO co-director, interview, 2008)

Marco addressed these concerns in a 2010 Facebook post, emphasizing the negative impact of being overly angry or cynical:

There is plenty to be angry about in Honduras. There is tremendous suffering, injustice, and inequities. But if we allow ourselves to be consumed by our anger and cynicism, rather than channelling that energy into positive and constructive efforts to help those in need, then we are of no use to anyone because we end up becoming another part of the problem. (Marco, Facebook note, July 2010)

The implication here (and in the quote at the beginning of this section) is that negativity is natural, and that humans are often critical and divisive:

Being negative and critical are human traits that tend to cause bad feelings and end up creating divisions. To be effective, a movement must use its time wisely. We cannot do this if individuals dwell on ideas or beliefs that prevent them from identifying synergies that allow them to support each other's work. (Marco, Facebook Note, August 2009)

Although intended as a means to promote synergies between organisations in Honduras, these types of statements infer that those individuals who are critical, or indeed those with political interests or agendas that do not fit the constructive philosophy, create problems and are unwelcome in projecthonduras. This has considerable consequences for projecthonduras, having a strong influence on the make-up of the projecthonduras community and the type of networking and action that is taken. These consequences will be discussed in later chapters of this thesis, along with analysis of the roots of the philosophy in the underlying politics of the network. At this point it is important to note that the intent of the philosophy – the three pillars of positivity, constructivism and

apoliticism – is to be energetic, creative and non-divisive in order to maximise the benefits to Honduras and Hondurans:

> *The tone and manner in which we carry out this strategy is equally important. For this, we have adopted a philosophy that emphasizes thinking, saying and doing things that are positive, constructive, and non-divisive. The premium isn't on winning, making money, or feeding egos, but rather on helping for the sake of helping and coming up with creative solutions to problems that need to be solved.*

> *It is all part of our unconventional movement to change Honduras. (projecthonduras.com, 2005)*

In this quote Marco describes projecthonduras as an "unconventional movement". This is one of the most common descriptors of the network, along with the term "alternative model". These are the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

An Unconventional Movement and an Alternative Model

Unconventional Movement

> *There is a loosely-tied body of people who have come together under the Conference on Honduras. The word "Conference" refers to more than just a specific event. It refers to a living, breathing movement of like-minded individuals from all walks of life who share a common interest... to contribute their time, energy and expertise for the betterment of Honduras. (Marco, Facebook note, 9 March 2009)*

The terms "movement" and "unconventional movement" are used frequently around the website and in Marco's communications – for much of 2008 the first page on the projecthonduras.com website simply stated "welcome to the movement". Marco defines an unconventional movement as:

> *Unconventional movement means using Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) to locate, mobilize and coordinate all the human capital available for the purpose of empowering the people of a developing country like Honduras. Unconventional also means adopting a philosophy of focusing mainly on those areas in which you can make a positive impact without creating divisions*

in your movement. There are so many great movements that started off well, but then fell apart because their participants got caught up in petty fights about things they could not agree on. We want to focus primarily on those things that we can agree on, and so that is why we've opted to be apolitical and also avoid issues like religion, etc. (Marco, email, 2010)

The term unconventional is used in two ways here, to indicate the unique use of ICT for development by projecthonduras, and its unusual philosophy.

The projecthonduras model of using ICT to link and coordinate people and their 'human capital' was clearly unconventional at the time it was founded, and even in 2008 when this research project started, it was difficult to find comparable approaches to development. By 2011 it was not quite so unusual. As discussed in Chapter 2 this is the result of the rapid spread of Internet and Web 2.0 and the popularity and rapid proliferation of 'dot causes' and Web 2.0 inspired group action (for example, see Shirky, 2008 and Watson, 2009), which has led to a concomitant interest in social networking for development (Barth & Rambaldi, 2009; Heeks, 2008; Thompson, 2008; Zuckerman, 2007).

While the use of ICT is no longer as unconventional as it was in 1998, the idea of being an unconventional movement is also strongly linked to the apolitical, constructive and positive philosophy of projecthonduras. It is somewhat akin to the idea of "opposite George" discussed earlier in this chapter: the notion that the network operates on different principles to other development efforts. It is different, and the people within it think and act differently. From the beginning Marco believed that this unconventional approach would be the key to bringing change to Honduras:

> *If we can merge this positive spirit with our talents and resources and the selfless affection that we have for Honduras, it would be fascinating to see how much we can do. It would be a rather unconventional movement we would be creating to affect change in our country. But you know, unconventional approaches have a way of gaining momentum sometimes. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 1998)*

The idea of gaining momentum sheds some light on the use of the term "movement" by projecthonduras. While, as discussed in Chapter 2, the term movement is usually associated with ideas of collective action, often political, and with protest and confrontation (Diani, 2000; Tarrow, 1998), the apolitical and non-divisive philosophy of

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projecthonduras precludes any overt or partisan political purpose and any direct confrontation. However when viewed in the context of a change process the idea of being a movement makes more sense. It implies action, also consistent with a philosophy of constructivism. The word movement also applies to the way in which Marco believes projecthonduras will grow. As discussed in the previous chapter, projecthonduras relies on a model of organic growth, spreading through person to person contact rather than traditional hierarchical organisational models.

While projecthonduras does not easily fit the general conception of a social movement, it is important to note that it does not claim to be. Rather it claims to be an unconventional movement, an apolitical, constructive and positive movement to bring change to Honduras.

An Alternative Model

> *How do you create an alternative model of development for poor countries like Honduras, using human capital, not financial capital, human capital being energy, ideas, creativity, talent, experience, expertise, all that stuff? How do you do that… and combine it with ICT? (Marco, welcome speech, conference on Honduras 2008)*

One of the most common descriptors for projecthonduras, alongside "unconventional movement" is the term "alternative model" for development. As with the word unconventional, the use of the term alternative indicates something outside the mainstream, a non-traditional approach to development (see discussion of alternative development in Chapter 2). Projecthonduras therefore uses the term to differentiate its model from that of mainstream or traditional development agencies, both in terms of its approach to development and the way in which it is structured and operates. The projecthonduras approach to development will be examined in depth in Chapter 9; this section will look more closely at the model and various ways that it has been visualised.

The term model denotes a representation or description of a system or structure, often intended for use as an example for others to copy. In the Stockholm Challenge documents Marco clearly indicates that it is indeed his vision that projecthonduras be a replicable model, stating that "the projecthonduras.com model could be successfully replicated by a

dedicated individual, small group, large organization or government" (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2004).

Despite this, as noted in the previous chapter, projecthonduras has no formal structure that can easily be transposed into a replicable model. The basic tenet of the model is simple though: to develop Honduras by connecting people and ideas using ICT. This model has been described and interpreted in a couple of different ways – by using a formula, and through a 'flower' diagram. Projecthonduras has also been described as having 'many models' which are 'pieces of a puzzle'. The remainder of this section will describe these representations as a way of getting to the heart of projecthonduras and its alternative model.

The formula

In his welcome speech at the Conference on Honduras 2008, Marco introduced a formula he believed summarised the projecthonduras model:

HC x ICT = projecthonduras.

In this formula the HC is Human Capital and ICT is the Internet and Communication Technology used to connect the human capital:

> *This morning when I was getting ready to come here I had a revelation. I wanted*
> *to create a formula, like Einstein's theory of relativity. This is it.*
> *projecthonduras.com = HC X ICT... real simple. But you gotta take advantage of*
> *the tools that are out there. Money is really important however it's a tool. It's not*
> *the end aim, so if you get people communicating, if you get people passionately*
> *involved in Honduras... the money will start to flow, have faith... But you've got*
> *to get that relationship started. (Marco, Conference on Honduras, 2008)*

In this formula the ICT refers to the website and forums of the projecthonduras online network (arguably it also refers to conference which is designed simply as an extension of the online network): www.projecthonduras.com, the Yahoo, Facebook and Twitter forums, and most recently, *Honduras Weekly*. The Human Capital component is as defined above, although in this formula, as in much of his writing, Marco is referring not to the broader sense of all human capital available for development efforts in Honduras, but

more specifically to the human capital contributed by the engaged network that is projecthonduras, and their wider personal and professional networks.

While the people and organisations that provide this 'human capital' have been around in Honduras for a long time, they have often been isolated. As Marco indicates, what is alternative and novel about the projecthonduras model is the idea of linking this human capital via ICT:

> *But you've heard all this stuff about human capital, our formula HC x ICT... that's a great thing, it just simplifies the idea. The new, the only new ingredient here really that we didn't have is the Internet, the technology, it's the cell phones (Marco, interview, 2008).*

Although, as noted in the discussion on the term unconventional movement (above), by 2010 the idea of using ICT for development was perhaps not so new, what remains somewhat unique about this approach is the way in which Marco envisages the components of the formula – ICT and Human Capital – working together to create projecthonduras. It is a multiplication formula, reflecting the idea that the value of human capital is multiplied though the use of ICT. This is in effect a mathematical representation of the idea of organic growth, what one participant called a "contagious snowball effect". Marco describes it this way:

> *We thought we could take this new information technology... ICT... instead of money use technology to bring people together that are already doing wonderful work in Honduras. Already spending money, already building schools, already building hospitals, already teaching. What happens if you get all these people together, if you located them, find out who they are, find out their strengths and weaknesses and get them to start talking to each other, sharing information, wow what a concept, sharing info, working together, coordinating their efforts, building on each other strengths, making up for each other's weaknesses. (Marco, Conference on Honduras, 2008)*

This is essentially the alternative model offered by projecthonduras, using ICT to connect, communicate and coordinate people, thereby multiplying the impact and spreading the benefit of their 'human capital' more widely. As Paulina noted, projecthonduras has the

"potential to leverage or magnify what one person or a couple of people are doing by sharing knowledge and connections." One long-time participant in projecthonduras puts it this way:

> *I think the huge potential of project Honduras is the fact that it can (or could) be a real solution to so many development issues by virtue of the fact that it can network so many people and projects in real time. It is (as Marco has said often) "just a network" but if all the cross strands of a net are pulled together its "catch" or ability to produce results are exponentially increased. (Ben, US American school director, interview, 2009)*

This formula, however, does not quite encapsulate the whole model. Integral to the model is the philosophy as outlined above. This philosophy underpins both the nature of the 'human capital' preferred, and the way in which people interact both online and off:

> *Imagine the potential impact of thousands of organizations working together to empower the people of Honduras, and doing it without bickering, fighting and getting overly distracted by side issues. (Marco, Facebook note, June 2009)*

The specifics of how this works, and the implications of both the philosophy and the model for development in Honduras will be elaborated in later chapters of this thesis. The next section however will look at another conceptualisation of the model, the network of networks or flower model.

Flower network

At the 2009 conference on Honduras, two-time conference attendee and social media proponent, Critt Jarvis presented on 'Extending the Conference on Honduras'. In the course of that presentation he showed delegates his idea of how the network works, through the visual tool of a flower network (figure 5).

Critt explained it this way:

> *The little dot in the middle, that's you, you as an individual, you're the little dot in the middle. Everybody else in the room is their own dots. In social networking parlance, this is the individual; this is your social graph. In my social graph this little dot (pointing to centre of diagram) is me... this social graph (pointing to a cluster of blue and green dots) is friends and family... This group (pointing to another cluster) we can call civil society, civil organisations, NGOs, non-profits...*

This private enterprise (another cluster), down here (another cluster) are aid and development agencies... And these guys (another cluster), this is basically all the folks in Honduras...

What's this orange thing? That's the social networking platform. It could be Facebook, it could be Twitter, it could be just a blog, it could be gmail, email. So this all this is a tool, an enabling tool. ... you can take yourself out of whatever social graph you might be in, it might be more than one, and put yourself in the middle ... (Critt Jarvis, presentation at the conference on Honduras, 2009)

Figure 5: Flower diagram of projecthonduras
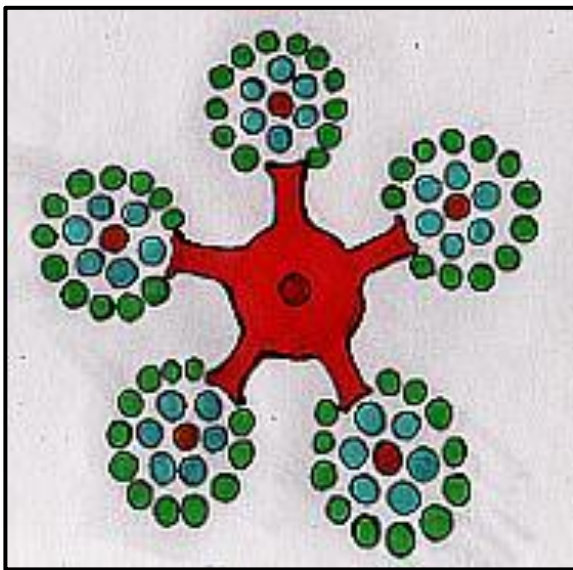
Critt Jarvis, Conference on Honduras 2009

Critt's presentation and description of the diagram caused some discussion at the conference, particularly around the idea of who was the centre of the projecthonduras network, and led to the comments by Marco quoted in the previous chapter, as he argued that his role was a central one:

If you look at me as that dot in the middle, then I kind of serve as a go-between between you and all of the other groups that are out there... (Marco, Conference on Honduras, 2009)

This led to a question from a conference attendee:

I have a question, or a point of clarification. The way I see what Critt just explained (was that the network was) like Facebook, where everybody is kind of in

control of their own platform and making the connections themselves to different officials, civil society, different NGOs whatever. And then Marco seemed to be saying wait, it's important that somebody is in the centre navigating all of this in addition to? Is that the correct way to look at it? (Conference delegate, Conference on Honduras, 2009)

Marco answered that:

It doesn't have to be one centre, I think the moment that you start navigating and passing on information then you can become the centre too. There can be many centres. I just happen to be a main centre, because I own the rights to the website and have been pushing this for the last 10 years. But the moment you start using our web, our sub-web you can become a centre as much as I can. It depends on how active you want to be, how much energy, you want to expend, how much time you want to spend on it. (Marco, Conference on Honduras, 2009)

Interestingly this is in fact a clear visualisation of the structure of the network. Marco is the central dot, and his method of building projecthonduras organically, through his own contacts and personal efforts is a reflection of this. However it also highlights the broader, interconnected nature of projecthonduras. While Marco may be at the centre of the official 'projecthonduras' network, that network exists within a wider network of networks. As Critt's diagram illustrates, each petal is a flower of itself, each individual connected to the projecthonduras hub has their own set of connections. This is consistent with Wellman's (2004, p.127) assertion that the Internet is now helping each person to become a communication and information switchboard, with information and resources passing between persons, networks, and institutions through Internet enabled links.

These connections, initially between projecthonduras - linked organisations and individuals - are very broad. Beyond the links between NGOs and other development organisations, the flower network illustrates the way in which connections can be made to Honduran organisations and communities, as ties from the centre link through the organisations to their networks in Honduras. The vision is that the network links facilitated by projecthonduras create cross-flower links between individuals, organisations and communities that may never otherwise make contact. This allows for a flow of knowledge, skills and resources that could potentially spread across Honduras

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and beyond. This is clearly a very promising model, although it also leads to the question of just where the boundaries of projecthonduras are. This question will be addressed in some depth in the next chapter.

Pieces of a puzzle

> *You see I'm carrying around a very wrinkled program, we try to keep you all on schedule, but the more I do that, the more I read the description that all of you have sent me of your presentations, and the more I read the more I'm impressed and the reason is because in this little program, as in every year, are the solutions to Honduras' real problems. I always hear, everywhere I go, how do you solve Honduras' problems and all of your presentations provide a piece of the puzzle... so I want to thank all the panellists yesterday, today and tomorrow because you really are providing models of solutions to the real problems of this country.*
> *(Marco, Conference on Honduras, 2008)*

The third description of the alternative model is the idea that projecthonduras is not simply one model for doing development, but consists of many models. This is not so much a networking model, but rather it refers to the models of development practice used by each organisation in projecthonduras. The argument here is that each individual and organisation linked through the projecthonduras network holds a small piece of the puzzle, a small part of the answer to poverty and underdevelopment in Honduras. Marco in particular firmly believes that the grassroots and volunteer projects undertaken by most of the organisations in projecthonduras are each models for development in their own right:

> *The groups in our network have thousands of grassroots projects in Honduras focusing on core needs such as education, healthcare, clean water, caring for orphans, HIV/AIDS, and micro-credit. There are wonderful models for effectively addressing these needs in Honduras, and we try to highlight them at our annual three-day Conference on Honduras in Copán Ruinas (Marco, letter to the Honduran Secretary of Tourism, July 2009).*

> *Between the 'Micah Project', 'Students Helping Honduras', and 'Helping Honduras Kids' (and other projects too numerous to list here), there is more than enough expertise, experience, wisdom, energy, and compassion to supply the*

answers needed to effectively address the problems of street children, abandoned children, ignored children, and thus inevitably also the problems of crime, drugs, and violence that increasingly plague and bewilder Honduras. (Marco, Facebook Note, March 2009)

As the preceding discussions of the ICT x HC formula and the flower network models indicate, the idea is that projecthonduras simply links these individual projects – or models – together via the Internet and annual conference so that the efforts can be multiplied across Honduras.

Many of you have developed wonderful models for effectively addressing core problems in Honduras. We need to spread these models throughout Honduras and increasingly link up with Honduran individuals and organizations. It is this networking that projecthonduras.com has been pushing online for the past 12 years and through the Conference on Honduras for the past nine years. (Marco, Yahoo forum post, July 2009)

The idea of 'many models' is therefore the core of the projecthonduras model, which links these smaller models for health, education and community development together to form a larger model, a network of networks for development in Honduras. This idea is a key one in understanding projecthonduras' approach to development, something which will be discussed in depth in Chapter 9.

Potential and Possibility

One key theme that emerges clearly throughout this chapter and the previous one is the idea of promise, or possibility. From the founding of the projecthonduras business network in 1998 to the multiple forums and technological reach of the network in 2010, projecthonduras has been imbued with a sense of promise, of the possibility of a new approach to development that has the potential to change Honduras for good. This sense of promise is also evident in the philosophy, which focuses on the positive and constructive ways in which the skills, experience and knowledge of people can be multiplied for the benefit of Honduras.

The potential of the projecthonduras network was also a key theme in my conversations and interviews with many projecthonduras participants, who saw the network as having

a unique contribution to make to their work in Honduras. The remainder of this chapter will look at this promise and the potential contributions of projecthonduras, as identified by those involved. However it is also important to note the caution of many participants in their appraisal of progress so far: although the idea of projecthonduras was one of enormous potential, many believe it has yet to reach that early promise and may never do so.

One of the key reasons for optimism about the potential of projecthonduras is its strengths-based approach. One of Marco's favourite explanations for the continued existence of projecthonduras is the idea that it enables organisations to learn from and work with other organisations and to not "re-invent" the wheel:

> *The idea is to encourage "networking" so that individuals and groups can find ways to share information and coordinate their efforts... The premise is that more can be accomplished more efficiently through greater economies of scale. No need (to be) recreating the wheel when you don't have to. No need to purchase stuff when perhaps it can be borrowed. No need to spend valuable time trying to develop the right contact when someone might immediately point you to that person.(Cáceres Di Iorio, 2008a)*

This phrase was echoed by others in the network, who saw this as one of the main contributions projecthonduras could make:

> *(Projecthonduras is) a forum where you could network with other people. I found it online and I signed up. I've been to the last six meetings in Copán Ruinas... I find it invigorating to talk with other people who have similar interests. None of us need to re-invent the wheel, there's always somebody who maybe knows better than you how to do something. I think that's the big advantage of it, just get together both online, in person, network, talk with people can help you or you can help them. (David A., US American NGO director, interview, 2009)*

> *I don't want to reinvent the wheel, so am looking to see what others are doing and what works/doesn't work. (Robert[63], US American volunteer, email interview, 2009)*

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[63] Psuedonym

While many participants in projecthonduras are happy to use the network simply as a means to improve on their own work in Honduras (these practical outcomes will be discussed further in the next chapter), what this chapter highlights is the idea that projecthonduras is not simply about coordination of projects and learning from others, but that the use of the terms 'unconventional movement' and 'alternative model' indicate a much larger vision. As Marco notes in the quote above, projecthonduras is about 'economies of scale'. It is about harnessing the power of technology and 'human capital' not only to avoid duplication but to multiply the efforts of participants in the network. This is also reflected in Marco's use of the quote from Deng Ming-Dao, quoted in the previous chapter, which highlights what he and many others believe is the full potential of projecthonduras – to ignite change that will spread and grow like fire.

The sense of possibility is derived not only from the perceived power of the model, but from the underlying philosophy of projecthonduras. By basing projecthonduras on the principles of being apolitical, constructive and positive, Marco has created a network with a sense of potential and promise, along with an atmosphere that intentionally works to promote goodwill and understanding between participants:

> The one thing we all have in common is a desire and willingness to help empower the people and communities of Honduras. It is precisely that that will draw us together at the Conference on Honduras 2009. We seek to meet to exchange our respective stories, look for ways to complement and coordinate our efforts, and perhaps even to share our resources. We seek to do this in an environment that is positive, constructive, and fun.

> It is this strategy and philosophy that has held the Conference on Honduras together for 10 years and kept it growing and fuelling creative ideas for solutions to problems in Honduras... always with a spirit of openness and goodwill. We will continue this way this year, and for as long as we can into the future. (Marco, post on HTW blog, September 2009)

That sense of goodwill was highlighted by Leopoldo, a Honduran conference participant:

> I never felt any barrier... like I have felt in other conferences, Christian conferences. You know, the guest speaker up here in a huge hotel, the other guys in a tiny little pension (boarding-house). No, there (at the projecthonduras

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conference) it was more like even... so I think it can work. (Leopoldo, Honduran
NGO director, interview, 2008)

The role of projecthonduras in promoting goodwill and understanding includes both the atmosphere at the conference and online, and it extends well beyond the network, as was highlighted by US Ambassador to Honduras Hugo Llorens in his opening address to the Conference on Honduras in Copán in 2008:

Church groups, colleges, student associations, and NGOs play a crucial role in
development. The dedication of volunteers and assistance demonstrated by all of
you are inspirational to me and contributes significantly to the goodwill and
understanding between our two countries.

This quote highlights a key source of promise in the network, the relationships it promotes, not only between organisations within the network, but also between the participants in the network, and the Honduran communities they work in:

The government cannot resolve the problems of Honduras. Individuals and their
networks of friends, relatives, and colleagues -- working together in relationship
with the people of Honduras -- WILL. (Marco, Facebook Note, 2009)

In addition to highlighting the relationships, goodwill and understanding generated by projecthonduras, these last two quotes also identify another contributor to the promise of projecthonduras, its diversity. The network is open to a diverse group of individuals and organisations, from a range of different backgrounds and undertaking a variety of projects and programmes. This is the 'many models' concept within projecthonduras, that the organisations within projecthonduras each hold a piece of the puzzle and therefore it is important to bring them together and link them up in order to maximise the benefit for Honduras.

It is through the meeting and linking of diverse organisations and individuals that personal relationships and unity arise, the basis of the good-will and understanding generated by projecthonduras, as one participant noted:

It's the diversity. It's a group of religious people, and also people that are not so
worried about being religious. Among those groups there's also diversity. You
know I feel like we have... a unity that I've never felt before. You know, here we

are, a group of Mormons, and there we have a group of all sorts of other religions all together in projecthonduras and it brings unity toward that goal that we all have. We want to help, and that's great that it's able to cross those barriers and bring us together...

... Maybe in the past (or) if we had met in any other circumstances we might not have even looked at each other with any care, and yet here we are in this, we meet and we realise we're both trying to do the same thing, we want to help. (Steve, US American business owner in Honduras, interview, 2008)

The promise of projecthonduras is evident in this idea of a diverse group of people, coming together with goodwill and understanding, to work constructively together, and growing and spreading positive change across Honduras. Although there has clearly been some progress toward this vision (as the next chapter will show), a recurrent theme in the interview responses in this research was the way in which projecthonduras was not fulfilling that promise:

I think what he (Marco) has is kind of unique, but I also think it's just its potential hasn't been fully developed. It seems to me that he can actually get a real network together and get people talking and communicating and collaborating and just like coordinating at a bare minimum that would be really great. But I don't really know what the experience is to show how much impact that can have and how far it can go. Or maybe they are just breaking totally new ground. (Jackie, US American Development Professional, interview, 2009)

I can see a potential of being world leader in projecthonduras, and that's what I've told Marco a bunch of times, because it has the potential of making the all of the people who are helping into one powerbase, unfortunately human nature seems to defeat it. I'm not saying that it will always defeat it, but so far, it doesn't seem to be able to break through that thing of being a group of individual people all blowing their own horn. (Ben, US American school director, interview)

Project Honduras is an idea with a great potential that I fear has been squandered. (John, US American volunteer, email interview, 2009)

This lack of fulfilment of the promise of projecthonduras is acknowledged by the founders of the network, Marco and Paulina:

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To me, the power of the network has never been fully exploited or leveraged. In my view, that will happen when more members of the network take more initiative to use it, build on it and develop ideas and projects on their own from it instead of relying on Marco and a few people to keep moving it forward. (Paulina, co-founder of projecthonduras, email interview, 2009)

When the projecthonduras.com site was set up in December 1998, followed by the listserv forums... I sensed that our way of thinking and communicating would catch fire at some point, and that at some point our network would start to grow exponentially. I still believe this will happen, but I think it will take time. (Marco, Yahoo post, 2002)

The common theme in these explanations for the lack of progress is the need for the active participation of members. Even the strongest critics of projecthonduras have seen the potential in the idea, and yet the participation levels remain static and the potential remains largely unfulfilled. This apparent paradox, which will be discussed in the next chapter, has its roots in the structure of the network and in the very philosophy of projecthonduras itself.

Summary

This chapter has highlighted the promise and potential that draws people into the projecthonduras network. From the guiding philosophy of apoliticism, constructivism and positivity to the theoretical models for an alternative development, the rhetoric of projecthonduras is upbeat and full of promise. It is no wonder that Marco writes on the projecthonduras.com welcome page of "*an infectious awareness that pulls us, our friends, our relatives, our acquaintances, and our colleagues out of our apathy and isolation*". The aim is to get people "personally engaged" both in the work in Honduras, and in the projecthonduras network itself, thereby building an "unconventional movement" for change. This movement is to be built on the networking of many smaller models for change across Honduras, and the personal and professional networks of the development workers and volunteers within those networks. The promise is in the multiplication of these networks and models, an alternative development that grows organically from the group up.

As the quote that opened this chapter indicated, this is an ambitious and audacious vision. However while the rhetoric remains positive and full of the potential of the network, the reality is not so clear. Critical questions regarding the impacts of the network are visible even through the framework of AI. The next chapter looks some of the outcomes of involvement in projecthonduras and how the network actually functions, providing a basis for further critique and reflection on the promise – and politics – of projecthonduras in later chapters of this thesis.

Chapter 7: Participation: Spaces and Layers in a Dispersed Network

> *We give faith that projecthonduras.com represents a network of innovative and useful communication that promotes the social-economic development of Honduras. Through this interaction, thousands of Hondurans have been (sic) benefited: hundreds of poor children have travelled to the US to receive medical treatment; many students have had the opportunity to obtain funds for their studies and have been awarded with a scholarship; diverse organizations have formed strategic alliances, avoiding the duality of functions and obtaining a greater capacity to negotiate, thanks to the networking that this organization promotes. By means of its different forums (health, family, education, and orphanages), many necessities of schools, hospitals, orphanages, have been submitted in order to take advantage of the potentialities and strengths of other entities that carry out endeavours under the same areas of work. Also, information on medical brigades and donations is constantly diffused. (Dan, Letter of Support for projecthonduras entry into the Petersberg Prize competition, 2004)*

My exploration of projecthonduras started with great anticipation, based on the promises and potential of the projecthonduras rhetoric, and the stories of successful networking I heard and observed (such as the letter above) during early interviews and data collection. As previously discussed I initially structured the interviews using the principles of appreciative inquiry which meant that most early interviews were focused around the positive outcomes of networking through projecthonduras.com. It very quickly became clear that most of those who participate in the network have found the involvement in, and the contacts made through the network to be useful for their work in Honduras. The positive outcomes identified in this phase of the research reflect the promise and potential of the network.

However it soon became evident that these early findings were not the full picture. As discussed in Chapter 6, despite this promise and numerous stories of success, many participants do not believe the network is reaching its potential. As the fieldwork

progressed and I spent more time online and interviewing a wider range of participants in the projecthonduras network, I began to see more of this contradiction. There seemed to be little visible activity and it was difficult to see where and how the networking was happening. Digging deeper, I found there were some significant limitations to the online network, but I also began to realise that networking was occurring in other ways.

This chapter explores this apparent contradiction between the positive outcomes and lack of visible activity in the projecthonduras online network, and identifies the limitations to networking through projecthonduras. It then proposes a networking model which identifies the different spaces and layers of projecthonduras, a model which helps to explain the contradiction between the positive outcomes and the lack of visible activity. In doing so this chapter also starts to shed some light on the reasons why projecthonduras does not seem to be fulfilling its early promise, hinting at the underlying constructions and politics that form the basis of projecthonduras and the development work undertaken by its participants.

Outcomes of Participation in Projecthonduras

> *The most immediate benefit from the ability of individuals and groups involved in Honduras to communicate through the Internet forum created by projecthonduras.com was the synergy of relationships. Once people began talking to each other, things began to happen. People interested in helping had a means for getting involved, even from a distance. People confronting a problem had a way of generating ideas for solutions and some sense of hope that things could change for the better. People frustrated by bureaucratic ineptitude had a means of negotiating the system or getting a response. The ability to network has created an international community capable of uniting, organizing, collaborating, responding and helping each other and those in need. (Romero de Thompson, 2004)*

This quote is from the nomination documents for projecthonduras entry into the Petersberg Prize competition[64]. Projecthonduras was a finalist in the 2004 competition, a

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[64] The Petersberg Prize (now known as the Development Gateway Award) recognizes outstanding achievement in the application of ICT to improve lives in developing countries (World Summit on the Information Society, 2009).

significant achievement for a small, informal network, and one that reflects the many positive outcomes of participation in projecthonduras, benefits that were hinted at in the previous chapter which outlined the promise of the network.

These outcomes range from simple awareness of who else is working in Honduras to the facilitation of project collaboration and even full partnership, and are shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Outcomes of networking through projecthonduras

ROLE OF PROJECTHONDURAS	OUTCOMES FOR PARTICIPANTS
Introductions	Making contact with others Beginning relationships Encouragement and support Communication channels opened
Raising Awareness	Encouragement and support Awareness of others work Promotion of own work
Promotion of volunteer work	Promotion of own work Mobilisation of volunteers
Encouraging sharing and partnership	Sharing resources Project coordination Partnerships
Teaching	Learning Opportunities to teach others

Source: Author

Introductions

The primary benefit of participation in projecthonduras.com is making new contacts. Introductions are the first and most basic service of the network, introducing organisations and individuals to others working in the same area. The reason most people find their way to the website and forums or attend the conference is to consciously and actively look for contacts to assist them with their work in Honduras. These connections occur via links found on the website, through introductions made on the forums, and

through presentations and conversations at the conference in Copán, as these quotes from network participants indicate:

> And so I've met a lot of other orphanage directors and mission groups from the States starting orphanages asking for support ... through projecthonduras, through the listserv specifically for orphan care. (Andrea, US American NGO administrator, interview, 2008)

> The most valuable thing about the conference are the people that I have met. Both for the personal relationships as well and information sharing. I connected with some folks this year who already have given me some good ideas about my project proposal and who also have offered to be in contact with me in the future. I feel really good about those possibilities. (Lynn, US American volunteer, email interview, 2009)

Raising Awareness

Some of these contacts will go on to work together, but even where long term relationships do not eventuate, most participants see considerable value in simply becoming aware of other organisations working in Honduras:

> It [involvement in projecthonduras] has had an indirect impact in the sense that we are much more aware of how many organizations and individuals work in development, even in children's homes like ours (Daniel[65], European NGO director, email interview, 2009)

> It has made me more aware of what is going on in Honduras. My husband plans on attending this year's conference to make additional contacts. (Erin, US American missionary, interview, 2009)

> Seeing all of these people taking out time to come to Hondurans and hear our problems and that to me was very important. (Nina[66], Honduran NGO staff, interview, 2009)

Although most people come to projecthonduras.com looking for contacts or to raise their profile, many find the network is also a good source of support and encouragement.

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[65] Pseudonym
[66] Pseudonym

Many groups and organisations in Honduras work alone and isolated, and are often relieved to find others undertaking similar work. This is particularly relevant for those who attend the annual conferences in Copán Ruinas, where people are able to share experiences and encourage each other face-to-face.

> *It was very encouraging to see how many different people were there, and that I wasn't the only one that was trying empty the ocean with my teaspoon. That is a great encouragement. (David B., US American volunteer, interview, 2009)*

> *What comes to mind is the help the conferees and organisations get from meeting. It's like a therapy session, like a big group therapy... It's like I'm having a problem, don't worry we solved it this way, you'll be ok, you'll come through this. It's really a place where they come and project their needs and their worries and somebody else has already been there. (Flavia, Honduran businesswoman, interview, 2009)*

Promotion of Volunteer Work

Another form of awareness-raising by projecthonduras is the more general promotion of networking and volunteer work in Honduras and of what can be done by volunteer groups. An example of this is the use of YouTube clips on the projecthonduras.com website:

> *So if YouTube can work for political campaigning, in which the basic goals are to share a message, inspire, and mobilize people to act, then perhaps this tool might also be used for other worthwhile stuff like, oh... getting people to help other people in need? Well, this is already happening.*
> *If you go to www.youtube.com and do a search for "Honduras and mission" or "Honduras and children" or "Honduras and the poor", you will find dozens of clips filmed and edited by volunteer groups providing support to the people of Honduras. These are living testimonies to the work that is being done by countless private citizens and the work that is left to be done by so many others... These pieces, these faces, these moments can have a huge impact creating awareness in Honduras about how more than three-quarters of the country's people live and struggle every day. .. And if you can get to the point where you internalize the reality of this truth, actually feel it in your bones... then, that is when many people*

often say they start to get that urge to get involved and volunteer to give of
themselves. Some people call that inspiration. If you are searching for a little
inspiration, start with www.projecthonduras.com/clips/honduras.htm, then
move on to www.projecthonduras.com/clips/purewaterfortheworld.htm and
www.projecthonduras.com/clips/waterfirst.htm. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2008b)

Another example of general promotion is the way in which Marco is currently using Facebook. While Facebook was initially used primarily as a social activity, projecthonduras is joining a growing number of political, business and civil society groups who are beginning to see the powerful networking potential of these sites. In the case of projecthonduras.com, Facebook is seen as a means of creating awareness of social justice issues in Honduras as well as opportunities to help. While there has been considerable limitations to the use of Facebook within projecthonduras (as will be discussed later in this chapter), even after a few months this had some surprising results. While most participants in the network are established professionals, retirees and long-term volunteers, the 2008 conference was significant in that was the first attended by some Honduran students; young, educated Hondurans who may never previously have considered volunteering, and whose initial contact with projecthonduras was through Facebook.

The 2008 conference was also the first projecthonduras conference in which the US Embassy in Honduras participated, with a keynote presentation from the US Ambassador Hugo Llorens, and a town hall presentation by US Embassy Staff for US citizens (the political implications of this will be discussed further in Chapter 10). As previously noted, the participation of the Ambassador and embassy staff was not seen by the projecthonduras leadership as being political partisanship, rather as a way of showing them just how many different volunteer organisations are working in Honduras and what they are capable of.

Encouraging Sharing and Partnership

Beyond simple introductions, awareness and encouragement, participants utilise the projecthonduras.com network in a more strategic way, for coordination and sharing, and for informal teaching and learning, outcomes which are the key objectives of the network:

The conference, along with our online network, is designed to get individuals to
share what they have learned and encourage them to partner with each other.
(Marco, Honduras This Week, October 2009)

While formalised partnerships arising from projecthonduras.com do happen they are not very common. More often, projecthonduras.com contacts lead to one-off or informal coordination of projects, the sharing of physical, human and financial resources, and informal sharing of advice and experiences. Examples of coordination and sharing include health care organisations sharing medication and equipment; volunteers from one organisation participating in projects with another; coordination of shipping (for example, of supplies, donations etc.) to Honduras; assistance to individuals (such as the provision of medical aid or scholarships); cooperation on short term projects; sharing already developed contracts and protocols with new organisations, and matching the needs of one organisation with the resources of another. This coordination may be on-going, as in the case of an American doctor residing in Honduras, who informally offers his services to local children's homes, or a one-off event such as the conference delegate who asked me to take some boxes of supplies from the conference to another NGO near the town where I was staying as she was unable to get there herself. This was not an uncommon type of request:

Most of my contacts were made at the conference. In fact, I think all of them. I was
able to informally chat with others who do brigadas and we shared places to order
medicines. I was given a box of 25000 vitamins by one participant and another
who lives in Tegus stored them for me and eventually got them to Choluteca
where someone from the village we visit could get them. (Lynn, US American
volunteer, email interview, 2009)

Projecthonduras participants have assisted other NGOs and individuals in a variety of ways, from accessing resources (such as medical supplies) through to sharing document templates and project protocols:

I have met some people in the conferences, very interesting ones... 'Students
Helping Honduras' were so amazing, they have so much energy, the moment they
watch my presentation, they decided to help the indigenous people of La
Mosquitia, they collected almost $2000 and bought hundreds of pounds of seeds

for the people from many villages to have good plantations. (Norma, Honduran NGO director, email interview, 2009)

We've got a working model now, everything, the contracts, three years of running experience... I've definitely had people send for the copies of the (employment) contract (for local doctors) which we make available. (Rodger, US American NGO director, interview, 2008).

The second time I attended (the conference on Honduras), after my presentation I met a lady called Margarita who is a member of the Episcopal church of the US. They told us that in Villanueva they had a building and that we could use it for our project, so as an NGO we saved on buying land and the building... we saved money and now we have 30 children in that location. (Manuel[67], Honduran development worker, interview, 2009)

One of the more frequent coordination efforts occurs on the projecthonduras.com Yahoo healthcare list, where health professionals and others regularly post requests for advice and assistance for individual patients requiring medication, surgery or other advanced medical assistance not available in their area.

In February there was a group down from the States for just a week... medical brigade, a surgeon that was with them found a child who needed surgery. He was willing to pay for her surgery in Honduras, or in the States but I knew that wasn't necessary... it was just incredible, within 30 minutes of putting it on the listserv a lady in Los Angeles sent me a note telling me the name of a neurosurgeon where we could get started with it. It turned out that one of those surgeons did surgery at Maria Rivas (hospital) in San Pedro Sula ... It cost about $750 total. (David B., US American volunteer, interview, 2008)

In this case I got this email from a doctor... and he said he's heard about this little boy in Tegucigalpa who was born without an oesophagus... so he couldn't really eat. So, what do I do with this? ... Something so specialised as that... you cannot do the operation in Honduras. It requires finding someone in the United States to do it... so I put it out there [on the email list]. Well within a day or two... I started receiving some responses from the network. I received an email from someone...

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[67] Pseudonym

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that said we would like to take this case on, we can provide facilities ... and they found a doctor... that was willing to donate his services. So now we had the facility and the doctor. Now we needed a way to get the child and his mother to the United States. So somebody, I think in Continental ... decided they would give a ticket and provide an escort. So we had the transportation. Then I needed a host family. Turns out my parents decided to be a host family ... and finally he had the operation, what they did was they took a piece of his colon, and they fashioned an oesophagus from it...

But then there had to be follow-up, because even after he returned to Honduras... because there were points where his oesophagus they had created would start to constrict, and I remember one time... the doctor in Honduras, needed these things you would stick down to open up the oesophagus, they were very specialised instruments... So we got those, we sent them down to (to Honduras)...

...that kid now is about 7 or 8 years old, and he's fine. I mean without this operation, they would have kept on feeding his through his stomach through tubes, and he probably wouldn't have lived that long. It was just a weird weird case ... And so that's always been the one that I see, if it wasn't for our network [it wouldn't have been done], and it wouldn't have been an issue of money because you couldn't have done the operation here for any amount of money. (Marco, interview, 2008)

Teaching

One of the most valued outcomes of participation in projecthonduras.com is the teaching and learning that takes place. Although there are occasional teaching presentations at the conference and other formal initiatives, most of this education is informal. Participants learn about Honduras and about development from those who have been in Honduras for longer than they have, through conversation, direct advice and the sharing of resources. Frequently, when asked about the benefits of being part of projecthonduras, interviewees talked about how much they had learned from talking to others in the network, about mistakes avoided because they listened to someone who had already been there, and about learning where and how to get things done in a country where corruption and difficult bureaucracy are the norm. This informal up-skilling of small

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volunteer organisations through projecthonduras.com saves time and effort, and as noted earlier, helps to avoid "recreating the wheel if we don't have to" (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2008a). As these quotes indicate, this is particularly important to many of the participants:

> *The conference is a place where you can meet with many many people that are working in similar ministry around the country. It is a place where you can gather tons of helpful information about how to avoid some of the same problems that others have experienced. (Tindall, 2008 blog post)*

> *I'm willing to share my information... you don't have to know everything; you just have to know where to get it. I think projecthonduras is a place where I've gotten it. (Sally[68], US American NGO director, interview, 2009)*

> *My brother was on the listservs and he was communicating with people all the time, especially when we were facing some more difficult questions and we were able to get a really positive response, on land issues, on lawyer recommendations, on orphanages. (Cosmo, US American NGO co-director, interview, 2008)*

Several participants emphasized the role of projecthonduras in up-skilling and raising the standards of practice of non-profit organisations in Honduras. By providing access to information about development practice and to the knowledge and experience of individuals and groups who have been working long-term in Honduras, the network appears to facilitate informal peer to peer teaching and learning.

> *I think one of the biggest things that projecthonduras seems to do is I think it raises the bar, the standards for non-profits who work in Honduras, mainly because you can compare different organisations with each other. If you have information from 500 different organisations, you can tell what everyone's doing and if someone is doing a better job, you can kind try to improve yourself as well. So it really raises the standards... It's also [about] basic development practices that many people aren't aware of... [Without projecthonduras] it would have taken us a lot longer to get to where we are right now. We got a lot of information about how to get things started, land purchase, things like that. Raising our*

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standards. Thanks to projecthonduras in many ways, we are here where we are

right now. (Tim[69], US American NGO co-director, interview, 2009)

Low Participation

Clearly there are some very positive outcomes to networking through projecthonduras. Despite this, as noted in the introduction to the thesis, I was surprised that the number of forum posts on the projecthonduras.com Yahoo groups was low, and in some cases decreasing. The new Facebook and Twitter profiles, introduced in 2008, were not well subscribed or integrated. Many research participants revealed that they rarely used the tools, although Marco, as webmaster, does not keep track of visitor numbers:

> *I don't really track the visits to the projecthonduras.com website. I used to a few years ago, and it came out to roughly 200 hits per day, but "hits" doesn't really tell you how many unique visitors go to the site. So it's not that useful for me. (Marco, email, 2009)*

Despite the lack of visitor information, Figures 6 and 7 show very clearly the decrease in network activity over the past decade.

Marco acknowledges that activity within the Yahoo groups is low, and attributes this to the difficulty in mobilising people and his own level of posting:

> *The listservs [Yahoo groups] have never (from the start) been particularly actively used. The main reason the numbers were much higher in the first few years is because I was posting tons of information in order to get the dialogue moving and educating people about my vision for the listservs. After a few years, I simply lost steam.(Marco, personal communication, 2011)*

However the Yahoo groups are not the only site for networking within projecthonduras. Despite, or perhaps because of, the the decreasing forum activity Marco has experimented over the past few years with new social networking technologies. As discussed in Chapter 5, in early 2008 Marco created new Facebook groups and began to move the Yahoo forums to those groups and, in 2009, a Twitter profile was launched. In late 2010 these

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[69] Pseudonym

forums were still in existence, however they were also largely under-utilised, as illustrated by Figures 8, 9 and 10.

Figure 6: projecthonduras healthcare forum posts
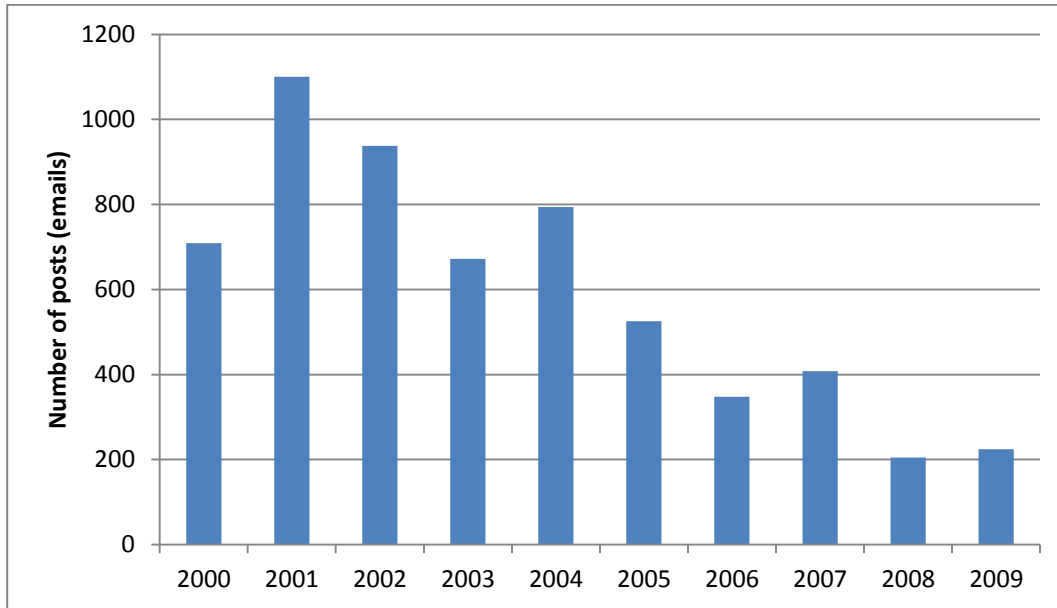
Source: Author (data from Yahoo groups message history tables)

Figure 7: projecthonduras education forum posts
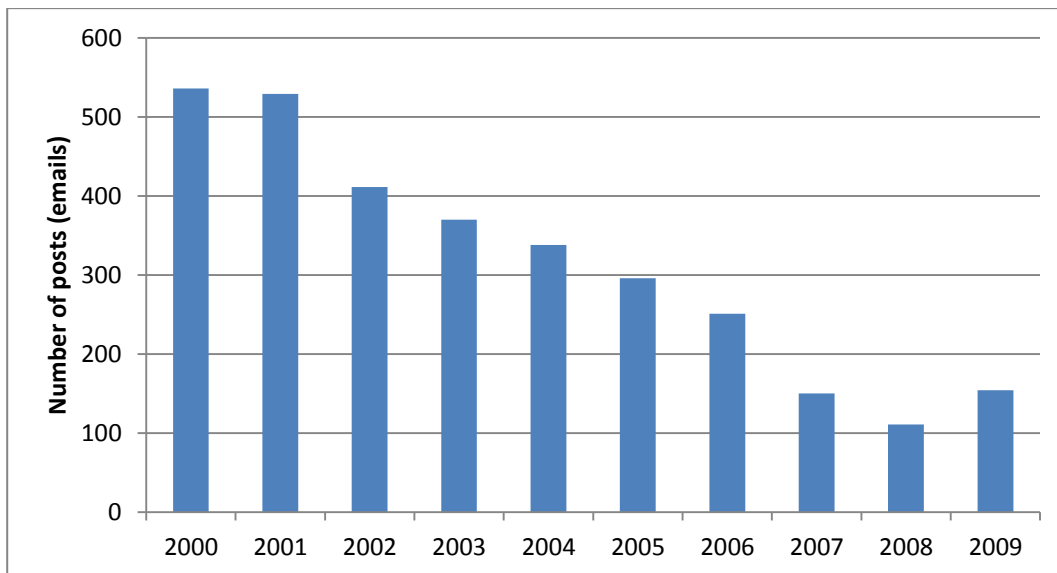
Source: Author (data from Yahoo groups message history tables)

Figure 8: projecthonduras.com Facebook page, June 2010 (screenshot)

The lack of activity on the Facebook page is evident here. In June 2010, over two years after it was created, the Facebook group has just 145 members; there had been no activity since January 2010, with only intermittent posts before then, and there is no commenting or conversation around any of the posts.

Figure 9: projecthonduras Facebook discussion page, June 2010 (screenshot)

This is the discussion page on the projecthonduras. Facebook group page (reached via the discussion link on the main page (Figure 8). In two years there were are only seven topics created, two of these posts are research updates from me, seven months apart; and none of these posts has any replies.

Figure 10: projecthonduras Twitter profile, June 2010 (screenshot)

The Twitter profile was also very low key. At the point this screenshot was taken the profile had been active for nearly 2 years, yet there had been only 131 intermittent tweets, and Marco was not 'following' anyone else, indeed it was around this time Marco effectively stopped using Twitter.. Most of the tweets were one-way broadcasts, providing information about the conference and not engaging in conversational tweeting.

This research identified several factors contributing to low – or hidden – activity within the network. While ostensibly welcoming all, the website sets in place some initial structures that serve to limit activity, enabling access for some, while discouraging others, and constraining the types of interactions that can take place within the network. These included structural and philosophical factors, including issues related to the website layout, Honduran Internet services, the abilities and priorities of the users, changes in the network tools used and in the network users themselves, the language used, and the underlying philosophy of the network. The next section will address these, before moving on to look at the question of where, and how, the networking that leads to the outcomes addressed at the beginning of this chapter is actually occurring.

Website Structure

Surprisingly, while projecthonduras.com markets itself as a primarily Internet-based network, with the website at its centre, the webpages remain largely static, and the basic design and function of the website has changed little since it first went online in 1998. The content of the website and the hyperlinks from it continue to be maintained by Marco as webmaster, and there is no dynamic content[70]. Website visitors and network participants are only able to read the site, watch embedded YouTube videos and explore the links provided, and cannot contribute to nor comment on the website content from within the website.

One of the issues with the website is the navigational structure of the website itself, which some find difficult to browse. Several participants expressed difficulty in finding the information they were looking for:

> *I find the web site a little un-user friendly, and difficult to browse through. However, I do know that it is there if I am looking for something. Also, I was under the impression that everyone who attended the conference, along with their group was going to be put on the site so we would know who each other is, and who is around. However, I notice that only a few groups are listed. Not very*

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[70] Dynamic content is a debated term but in this context I use it to refer to content on a website which is regularly updated, usually changing over time or through user interaction.

helpful when looking for people in your area. (Erin, US American missionary, interview, 2009)

(I have) only attended projecthonduras conference, (I) occasionally review the projecthonduras web site, but it really does not seem to offer much (Ronald, US American volunteer, email interview, 2009)

... if you are very patient and persistent you can find stuff (on the website), but it's not always intuitive, that's what I'm saying. (Critt, US American volunteer and social media proponent, presentation at conference on Honduras 2009)

Indeed, very few participants state that they regularly visit the website. Visitors who manage to negotiate the website and would like to participate further are directed away from the projecthonduras.com website to the online forums hosted by Yahoo groups, and to the Facebook profile as all networking is offsite on Yahoo and Facebook. This is because Marco believes it to be more effective and efficient to use existing free tools developed and maintained by others than to maintain dynamic content on the website itself.

Marco's preference for using offsite networking tools is perhaps a reflection of the fact that projecthonduras.com is an on-going experiment in networking, and Marco is continually trying new tools to encourage participation. However it is also important to note that projecthonduras has been in existence since 1998, when static websites were the norm. In 2010, at a time when many websites are now far more interactive, often using blogging software that allows easy updates and commenting, and having 'live' updates in the site, it appears projecthonduras.com may have been left behind. Users must continue to navigate multiple sites and tools and this is a likely contributor to low participation rates.

Another way in which participation is restricted by the projecthonduras online structure is by intentionally limiting the focus of networking to the three themes of health, education and community development. These are the focus areas of three of the four Yahoo forums, and the topics addressed at every conference. Although initially there was a variety of different forums including business and student support forums, since the unsuccessful move to Facebook these have consolidated around the three themes. While this maintains a tight focus on the types of projects represented and the topics of

conversation, it may serve to discourage participation of those who do not feel their projects fit these themes.

Lack of Access to Internet Services

Another key issue with online participation is telecommunications access and service in Honduras. Although Honduras now has extensive mobile Internet access, its mountainous terrain and poor infrastructure has long hindered the spread of telecommunications infrastructure. This meant that projecthonduras participants in Honduras often had limited or intermittent Internet access and were unable to fully participate. Improved mobile and broadband services mean that in 2010 this was less of a problem but many still cope with slow speeds and frequent Internet and power outages.

This lack of access to good Internet services was a leading factor in the failure of the Facebook and Twitter initiatives (discussed further below). Participants in Honduras had limited time and motivation to load image heavy webpages, and the simple email format of the yahoo groups were a reliable and simple means of access and sharing information.

> *I don't know what they were thinking. They took projecthonduras and put it on Facebook. And it's screwed, I couldn't ever get anything. Now they've gone back to the list, which is the good old-fashioned way, I like that. That whole Facebook thing was crazy... You see you have to have high speed Internet and down here we usually have dial-up... (Rodger, US American NGO director, interview, 2008)*

The lack of access to good Internet services has also been a significant factor in limiting the number of Hondurans who have been able to participate[71]:

> *I haven't (visited the website)… we don't have a public place that you can (access a computer) and it has been so expensive... I had to get rid of mine because financially (it) is a luxury; you've got to keep it up. (Nina[72], Honduran NGO staff, interview, 2009)*

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[71] Honduran participation will be discussed further in Chapters 7 and 8.

[72] Pseudonym

User Limitations

In addition to being limited by access issues, many potential and actual participants appear to have some difficulty with using the technology, and with finding the time or motivation to learn and do more online. These limitations to participation arise from the users themselves.

A significant user limitation is ICT knowledge and skills. This was clearly illustrated at the 2009 conference in Copán, following a presentation on using Web 2.0 tools. Marco asked the conferees to raise their hand if they were comfortable with ICT, and with using the Internet. About two thirds of conferees raised their hands. When he asked who was *very* comfortable with ICT and the Internet, just one-third raised their hands. Although this was a very un-scientific ad hoc survey, it highlights some significant limitations to participation for a network that claims to be primarily Internet based.

In addition, as previously noted, several participants noted that the website was not particularly user friendly, and the time and effort required to find information deterred them from further participation (see section below regarding structural issues for more discussion of this).

Difficulty with the website and a lack of ICT skills is also a significant issue affecting the involvement of Hondurans in the network:

> *For example... there was a worker (at an NGO medical clinic) whose son needed*
> *evaluation for a skull deformity. But Rosa was too shy, humble, whatever to ask*
> *for help. After work one day I sat with Rosa and showed her a few sites connected*
> *to the projecthonduras network, but it was plain that she was overwhelmed by the*
> *Internet technology and the complexity of the sites we visited. (Michel, Canadian*
> *volunteer and business owner in Honduras, email interview, 2009)*

Another user limitation is time. Even for participants who are confident in the use of ICT, the nature of the work of many projecthonduras.com participants meant that they have little time to learn new tools, or indeed to spend much time sending emails or holding conversations online.

> *I don't use them (the online forums) as much as I can because I get like 40 emails*
> *a day and sometimes I don't leave here until 4 o'clock in the afternoon, then go*

home and do a couple of hours of email... I'd like to do more with the forums and I
think the forums is a way to go but I cannot. (Sally[73], US American NGO
director, interview, 2009)

Attempted Move to Facebook

The effect of the poor Internet services and user limitations was particularly apparent in the short-lived transition to Facebook in 2008, when the Yahoo groups were closed. Many long term participants in the group resisted the change as they could not or would not use the Facebook groups. Facebook groups require the participant to have a Facebook profile, and some were reluctant to join. Many also had concerns about data security and privacy, particularly in the healthcare forums where details of individual medical cases are often discussed. A significant number of participants who were unable or unwilling to switch to Facebook were lost. Those that did switch often struggled, as posting a message to a Facebook group is not only more complex than sending an email, at the time the groups were formed posting required a visit to the Facebook page (rather than simply reading emails from within an email application) both to post, and to read other's messages.

I am not a huge fan of Facebook and use it sparingly... I can see the attraction of
Facebook but I am quite a private person and prefer emails to social page postings
(Michel, Canadian volunteer and business owner in Honduras, email interview,
2009)

I know he's changed the platform to Facebook more... I personally thought that it
was much more effective with the Yahoo forums... obviously, even someone like
me can have a little bit of difficulty using the Facebook feature that he has, in
terms of how to do the email blasts and things like that to everyone, I can only
imagine that someone who's in their 50s that can barely use email, that Facebook
is a little more cluttered. But I know that he still does the Yahoo forums as well,
but definitely there's much less activity. (Tim[74], US American NGO co-director,
interview, 2009)

Marco himself had difficulties sending group messages. Facebook limits the number of messages a group administrator can send and the needs of projecthonduras often exceed

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[73] Pseudonym
[74] Pseudonym

that. As a result Marco's Facebook profile was shut down twice for 'spamming'. After a couple of months the Yahoo groups (which had been closed but not deleted) were re-opened, however many users did not return. This accounts, at least in part, for the 2008 dip in the graphs above.

By 2010 the Facebook group, although still in existence, was largely inactive and had just 145 members (see Figure 8). In addition to the general difficulties with using Facebook outlined above, this may also be because the link from the projecthonduras.com website to Facebook went directly to Marco's personal profile, rather than the group page, meaning that potential visitors would bypass the group page. In fact, at the time of writing, the only way to find the Facebook groups was to search within Facebook. Indeed, Marco himself appears to have let the group lapse, and sees his own Facebook profile as being the projecthonduras page on Facebook:

> *The move to Facebook could be seen as a "failure" in the sense that many people on the Yahoogroups listservs were reluctant to switch. But many of them did. And the fact is that I managed to attract at least 2,000 people (mostly Hondurans) that I would not have attracted on Yahoogroups. So overall I'd say the move to Facebook has been a success. It's an entirely different audience -- mostly people who aren't doing much in terms of volunteerism. But at least now they know about projecthonduras.com and the Conference, and eventually perhaps we'll inspire some people to get involved. That, to me, is a worthwhile accomplishment.(Marco, personal communication, 2011)*

The 2000 people are Marco's 'friends' on his personal Facebook profile rather than people in the projecthonduras group. Even so, there continues to be some confusion regarding 'projecthonduras' on Facebook:

> *The first year I attended the conference, I remembered Marco saying something about a Facebook forum. And so I came home and said to my daughter, to whom I had promised never to join Facebook, that I was going to join it because I needed to connect with the forum. And so I did. But then, I never really found it. I still am not sure I have found it. I now am friends with Marco on Facebook, but mainly it seems like he sends out opinions and folks respond. I have not found a Facebook forum really. (Lynn, US American volunteer, interview, 2009)*

The implications of Marco's use of his personal page is an issue that will be returned to in later chapters.

Up-skilling

While there was a clear dip in participation following the change to Facebook the decline in activity on the network was evident long before the change. In fact it began relatively early, within a few years of the founding of the network. This dip appears to correspond with the increasing knowledge and experience of a core group of projecthonduras.com participants.

When projecthonduras.com was founded in the late 1990s it very quickly developed a core of active users, and reading through the forums it is clear there was a lot more conversation and online interaction taking place in the early days of the network. The early participants were predominantly North Americans beginning work in Honduras and often in the early stages of forming a non-profit organisation. Most had begun work at a similar time (the set-up of the network coinciding as it did with a spike in NGO activity in Honduras after Hurricane Mitch), and most were at a similar stage in their development, seeking assistance with legal and practical issues, and learning how to get things done in Honduras. They saw projecthonduras as a means to make contacts and find out information they needed early in this process, and much of the activity in the network was therefore related to the need to learn how to do things in Honduras.

> *I don't use (projecthonduras.com) as much as I used to. In the beginning when you're just starting a charity it's great, because you get a lot of advice from different people. Like (how to go about) registering your car, little things like that. (Rodger, US American NGO director, interview, 2008)*

As these organisations and individuals have made more contacts and up skilled over the past decade, they have also developed their own knowledge bases and as a result need less help and have had less need to turn to the forum to ask questions. In addition, they have formed their own networks and sub-networks, (often those working in geographical proximity or on similar project types) which tend to interact offline and in private spaces (using personal email, phone and instant messaging) rather than through the forums, as this quote indicates:

I don't think we use the networks so much now. I think in the initial stages, (but) as we get used to the (local) networks, the international networks, (projecthonduras was) a very good launching point.... I think in the initial stages like when we first wanted to buy a plot of land in Honduras, we didn't know what the rules were, the protocols, so we would send out emails and within 24 hours I'd get 10-20 responses from people from all over so it is very helpful in the first two years. (Cosmo, interview, 2009)

Language

Of some concern, given that this is a network of development organisations working in Honduras, there are significant obstacles to the participation of Hondurans. In addition to the limitations of access to Internet services and ICT skills discussed above, Honduran participants face a considerable language barrier as most of network activity is conducted in English. In fact prior to 2009 most of the website was available only in English, the conference page being the notable exception. This is an issue Marco was very aware of:

So I would say maybe 1/3 or 1/4 (of projecthonduras participants) are Hondurans and I think that has been our weakest point: we haven't been able to create more excitement within the Honduran population, and part of that is just being able to get the message out in Spanish. I speak Spanish fluently but my first language really is English, so most of what I've done has been mostly in English and that has been a weak point, so we're trying to correct that as quickly as possible. (Marco, interview, 2009)

As Marco notes, his first language is English, and in addition, in the early days of the network the key participants in the network were English speaking. Although identified as an issue, translation into Spanish was delayed by both interest and cost:

...all the information is in English... we don't have the economic resources to pay someone to translate the whole website … It's too much for Marco and this is all a volunteer work… we don't charge anyone for doing this… So that's why it made things a little bit difficult... Because translating a website it's expensive... and so far we haven't seen yet that interest in Honduras, in Hondurans to say well it's really worth it to try to find some kind of funding to do this (Sandra G, Honduran businesswoman and conference organiser, interview, 2008)

The motivation to finally translate the site into Spanish came in 2008, when a small group of Hondurans volunteered to help with the translation:

> *Leopoldo: Marcos quiero aprovechar este espacio para preguntarte si podemos tener un opción para tener tus comentarios en español. Yo me ofrezco para ayudar con la traducción. Así podremos alcanzar a aquellos que solo hablan Español, especialmente a mis hermanos CATRACHO* [Marco I would like to take this time to ask if we can have an option to have your comments in Spanish. I offer myself to help with the translation. Then we can reach those who only speak Spanish, especially my CATRACHO (Honduran) brothers.]

> *Marco: Leopoldo... One of the weaknesses of projecthonduras.com is indeed that I only have time to write in English, and thus we miss reaching all those Hondurans who only speak Spanish. Also, the fact is that while I can speak Spanish fine, my written skills in the language are only average. Yes, please feel free to translate anything I write into Spanish and distribute as you like. Lastly, if you're open... I'd love to have help in turning the main segments (at least) of the projecthonduras.com into bilingual pages. Thanks!*

> *Rubén[75]: Yo te puedo ayudar también con todo gusto! [I can also help you gladly!]*

> *Lucía[76]: Tambien yo! [Me too!]*

> *Leopoldo: Bueno ya ves Marco, no estamos solos... Danos una pauta de como quieres que lo hagamos. No soy muy ducho en esto de Internet. Así que espero me digas que podemos hacer. Ya somos tres los que estamos listos..... [Well you see Marco, we are not alone... Give us some guidelines about how you want us to do it. I'm not very adept at this Internet. So I hope you can tell me what to do. We are three who are ready .....]*

> *(Facebook comments, Oct 24, 2008, Note that Leopoldo asked the question in Spanish, Marco replies in English. Not long after this exchange the translation of the website began.)*

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[75] Pseudonym

[76] Pseudonym

Over 2008 and 2009 some effort went into making the network bilingual and there is now a link to a Spanish mirror of the site on the first page. Much of the translation has been done voluntarily by Leopoldo, a Honduran who works as a free-lance translator and who has been an active participant in the projecthonduras.com network.

Despite the launch of the Spanish mirror of the site, in 2010 there were still language related issues. The website still opened automatically to the English page and Spanish speakers had to find and click on the ES link at the top of the page to access the information in Spanish. In addition, at the time of the change to Facebook the under-utilised Spanish forum was dropped leaving only English-language forums, give or take the occasional Spanish post (although there were significant Spanish conversations on Marco's Facebook page). Finally, the conference format continued to be dominated by English, although simultaneous translation is provided.

> *I have to say that there were a lot of things that bothered me about the conference as well... the ironic--and disappointing--part of the conference, was that we were in Copán Ruinas, Honduras (an Americanized tourist town), primarily conducted in English (headphones with translator for Spanish-speakers), and the majority were Americans talking about their work in Honduras instead of a discussion between Hondurans and Americans about their mutual work together in the country. (Chapin, blog post, 2008)*

Philosophical Influences

While issues related to Internet availability and usage, network structure, the up skilling of projecthonduras participants and language explain why many of the longer term users are no longer so active, it still doesn't provide a full picture. Many of these same users were active in other forums, and many subsequently learned to use Facebook and other applications. Marco continues to claim that the network itself continues to grow. Rather than being the full picture, perhaps these somewhat superficial explanations are a hint of some more complex issues related to the philosophy of the network.

The website and forum descriptions clearly state that the network is apolitical and focused on topics that are constructive and positive. It encourages a "positive, focused dialogue of what needs to happen", and takes an apolitical stance:

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> *We agree to remain apolitical. We agree on a philosophy of how to engage each*
> *other so that we do not fall into the habit of bickering. (projecthonduras.com,*
> *2010)*

To do this the website itself channels visitors to particular places and sites, prioritises certain viewpoints and, as illustrated by the above quote, actively discourages certain types of talk. This clearly defines the way in which the individuals within the network should engage with each other. This philosophy is even more evident once visitors click though and join the email list. Regular emails and Facebook posts from Marco (particularly leading up to the annual conference) also remind list members of the philosophy.

While this approach has been effective in minimising divisive and potentially inflammatory discussions it has also meant that conversations have remained largely superficial, and focused mainly on practical aspects of work in Honduras. It has also meant that those who are interested in conversation on potentially divisive topics, or who hold strong political views, have been less likely to participate.

> *I will probably not attend another conference but watch what's happening on the*
> *website to find people. I have some real questions about the conference since it does*
> *not really help us to understand the political, social, cultural and religious*
> *environment within which groups work in Honduras. (John, US American*
> *volunteer, email interview, 2009)*

This side-lining of differing views was especially evident in the use of Marco's personal Facebook profile during the coup events of mid-late 2009, when political allegiances became obvious. Throughout this time the Facebook link on the website lead to Marco's personal Facebook profile rather than the group profile. While Marco worked hard at keeping the projecthonduras.com site and forums apolitical, his Facebook profile reflects his personal politics which was clearly partisan, and as a result this politics was reflected onto the network. The philosophy and politics of projecthonduras has a strong and enduring impact on the network, both internally and as it is viewed externally, and is a key theme that will be the focus of much of the remainder of this thesis.

This section has outlined the reasons why there is little visible activity in the projecthonduras online network, identifying issues related to the websites, the users and

the philosophy. However this is clearly at odds with the research findings discussed in the first part of this chapter, which show that participation in projecthonduras.com has a range of positive outcomes. In fact as the research progressed it became clear that there is indeed a functional projecthonduras.com community. What was not immediately clear was how, with limited usage of the tools, the community actually functioned. The remainder of this chapter will explore this question, identifying where the networking is occurring and how.

Spaces and Layers

After some time doing both on and offline fieldwork, and many interviews and informal conversations with network participants, it became apparent that while at its most basic level projecthonduras.com is a website, the network and community form deeper layers. It is clear that much of the action actually occurs in these layers, in spaces that are largely offline and private. Although the website is the visible home of projecthonduras.com it has remained relatively static, serving to direct visitors to the networking tools. Both the website and the networking tools are largely public spaces, and are useful for finding contacts and making introductions; however their usefulness for active networking is limited by the factors outlined above. For this reason most active networking occurs "off-list" in private spaces such as by email, telephone or in face-to-face conversations. This is why the projecthonduras.com community is mostly invisible to the casual website visitor. This informal and private networking is recognised by Marco as part of the model, as he acknowledges in this quote from a radio interview promoting the conference in 2009:

> *What usually happens (during a conference) is that they'll collect business cards, they'll go have coffee outside, they'll have lunch together, they'll go out and meet at a bar later on after the conference sessions are over, they'll develop friendships and they'll identify areas on commonality, things that maybe they can coordinate on. (Marco, Radio Bruce interview 17/8/2009)*

The relationship between the layers and the private and public spaces of projecthonduras is outlined in the Figure 11.

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In the diagram the projecthonduras.com website simply refers to the webpages hosted at www.projecthonduras.com. As noted earlier in the article this is a static website maintained by Marco, and is the visible and publically accessible face of projecthonduras. Because it is static no networking activity occurs here, although visitors may find contacts through the links and maps, and information on where to go to access the forums and interact with other participants.

The next level is the network formed by the contacts made on the Yahoo and Facebook forums, and at the conference, and is therefore both on and offline, and more dynamic. It is visible, at least to other projecthonduras.com participants, and it is often mediated. This means that the interactions take place within the projecthonduras space (on the forums or at the conference), or through Marco or other active participants in the network. This is where introductions are made, participants are encouraged, and some education occurs. This is also clearly intended to be an apolitical space.

The projecthonduras community is the invisible and private layer where much of the action happens, and is the answer to the question posed earlier in this chapter - just how does the networking occur when so little is visible online? As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, while there is little visible activity at the website and network levels, participants have found projecthonduras to be a useful tool, enabling coordination, sharing, and education activities between organisations.

However there are obviously structural, philosophical and other limitations to projecthonduras, and as a result there often appears to be little online interaction. What this research has found is that the public face of projecthonduras – the website and the online network – is the tip of the iceberg. Most of the constructive networking has occurred in sub-networks and unmediated private spaces between the organisations and individuals introduced directly or indirectly through projecthonduras.

It is in these spaces where the hidden networking occurs, through face-to-face interaction, phone and private email, as Marco himself acknowledges:

> *Part of the reason is that people generally are reluctant to put themselves "out there". They prefer to e-mail one on one, behind the scenes. I know this is going on because people cc me constantly. But there is no way to track this kind of traffic… I just know it happens a lot. (Marco, personal communication, 2011)*

Figure 11: Diagram of the spaces and layers of projecthonduras

projecthonduras.com website			
Online	Static	Visible	Public

projecthonduras network			
On & Offline Forums, conference	Dynamic Introductions, Encouragement, Some Teaching & Learning	Visible	Public Interactions often mediated

projecthonduras community			
On & Offline Private email, Facebook, conference, personal relationships	Dynamic Coordination, Sharing, Teaching & Learning	Invisible	Private Unmediated

Source: Author

The projecthonduras community, which networks in these private spaces, is comprised of both active and visible network members, and also the broader community of development workers, volunteers and Hondurans who may not regularly interact in the online environment. It includes sub networks and private, personal networks, (conceptualised as clusters in flower networks by Critt Jarvis at the 2009 conference – see Chapter 6, Figure 5).

Clearly, once introductions are made, relationships quickly move offline or to private email and websites, where sharing of resources, and project and programme coordination is negotiated and deeper relationships formed. It is also at this level where political and

religious issues, strongly discouraged in the network space and absent from the website, are more frequently discussed.

This idea of projecthonduras being comprised of spaces and layers is one that will be returned to throughout the remainder of this thesis, as it helps to visualise how and where networking is taking place. It is of particular relevance to the next chapter, which describes and explores the projecthonduras community itself[77].

Summary

Although on the surface projecthonduras.com is an online network, the reality is that the network philosophy and structure limits the nature of online communication, and the individuals that make up projecthonduras.com are clearly more comfortable working in private spaces. The projecthonduras.com community exists, and is active, but not as a primarily online community.

The findings outlined in this chapter have considerable implications for those interested in Internet based networking initiatives. As discussed in Chapter 2, there is much excitement about the potential online networking tools such as group email lists, Facebook and Twitter have to assist with international development efforts (Ashley, Corbett, Jones, Garside, & Rambaldi, 2007; Heeks, 2009; Thompson, 2008). However it is clear that they are constrained by many factors including access to services, education and motivation, and the and the way in which even a seemingly open and non-political focus can determine who uses the network and how. This reflects the argument that online social movements are less authentic, and that the online context may inhibit trust and limit participation (Clark & Themudo, 2006; Russell, 2001). Nonetheless, this research indicates that face-to-face communication and private online spaces help to mitigate this

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[77] The low activity in the online network and the identification of the different public and private layers of projecthonduras, also left me with a methodological dilemma. As indicated in Chapter 4, I had started the research as a netnography of projecthonduras.com, intending to focus on the use of the Internet and online networking through the website and forums. This was obviously problematic, both in relation to the lack of activity, and to the identification of the wider projecthonduras community. It was evident that limiting my data collection to what was happening at the website and network levels would seriously constrain the research, and generate only a partial account of the projecthonduras network. Nevertheless in reconsidering the boundaries for the study I had to keep in mind the fact that much of what happened at the community level, although partially facilitated by projecthonduras, was private and not necessarily directly associated with projecthonduras.com. I therefore chose to expand the boundaries, asking questions and collecting data from a broader range of sources, while remaining respectful of the boundaries of private spaces.

and are still most important in building the trust relationships necessary for development work (see also Molony, 2007).

The experience of projecthonduras.com also highlights both how fast-moving the field of ICT and social networking is, and how slowly user communities may move, particularly in an international development context. Projecthonduras.com was a pioneer in the use of social networking for development, and yet in 2010 its static website and reliance on email groups means that it appears to be being left behind in a world of dynamic web content and new social networking applications (for example see Zuckerman, 2007). However, somewhat paradoxically, the history of projecthonduras.com also illustrates how change needs to be managed carefully, the near failure of the network over a shift to Facebook making clear the danger of moving too far away from the user community. The movement of conversation from public spaces to private spaces also highlights the preference of many for more personal relationship-based forms of networking.

Finally, it is clear from the discussions in this chapter that while the online aspects of the network are an on-going experiment, there is indeed a projecthonduras community, in which participants are able to share resources, coordinate and learn from each other:

> *… projecthonduras.com is one big experiment which is in a constant state of evolution. But while the technical aspects of it are always changing, the core of the network is simply the thousands of groups that are continuing to do work to empower the people of Honduras. A big part of why projecthonduras.com exists is to continue to help inspire, inform, and connect people in these groups. (Marco, personal communication, 2011)*

This is particularly evident in the success of the annual conferences in Copán Ruinas. However while the private spaces of the offline community allow for non-mediated conversation this community is shaped by the same structural and philosophical biases that limit online participation. This community will be examined more closely in the next chapter, the projecthonduras community.

Chapter 8: People: Exploring the Projecthonduras Community

> *This is a very diverse crowd. We have (people from) more than 25 States from the US here; we have (people from) at least a dozen departments of Honduras here. We have churches, we have universities, we have NGOs, we have government, we have military, almost everything... medical brigades - usually the biggest group... and all of you have a wonderful networking of contacts, you have fellow students, you have bosses, you have congregations, you have employees... you have businesses too, (and) NGOs. Spread the word about what you are doing, and then you get people connected to our website, and every year this conference will continue to grow. (Marco, speaking to the Conference on Honduras 2008)*

While an understanding of the history and structure of projecthonduras is important, a description of the network would be incomplete without discussion of the people and organisations that make up the network, particularly as one of the founding principles is the idea of linking 'human capital' for development. The importance of this community for the model is also evident in Figure 11 and in the discussion in the previous chapter which emphasised the foundation of the network in the people that make it up – without the community involvement the network becomes simply a static website and some unidirectional email lists. As such this thesis can perhaps best be understood as a study of the people and organisations that are the projecthonduras network.

As the quote above indicates, the vision of projecthonduras is premised on the idea that people working together can and does make a difference in Honduras. This idea has attracted the participation of people from a wide variety of organisations and backgrounds. The diversity of participants is seen by some as one of the strengths of the network and a source of great promise (see Chapter 6). Despite this critics of projecthonduras have accused the network of being a US-centric organisation whose participants are largely white, US American and Christian (Pine & Vivar, 2010). It is easy to see why. The website and forums are English dominated. Walking into the venue for the annual conference in Copán Ruinas one is struck by the sheer number of white, middle-aged faces. So who is right? Can the network be both diverse and homogenous? This chapter addresses this question through an examination of the basic structure of the

community, identifying the people and organisations that make up the projecthonduras network, and laying a foundation for later analysis of the work that they do in Honduras.

Human Capital

> *Human capital is a term for a value other than money... people have talents, they have abilities that are not valued and so human capital is putting a value on what they have to offer that's not financial. (Vicky, US American missionary to Honduras, interview, 2009)*

> *I believe human beings contribute immeasurably more than they send in cash. They are ambassadors, they come, they promote, they help, they motivate, they give examples. It's a one to one effect, they touch lives. It's not just like a World Bank organisation with a project and consultants and here's the money and pay somebody to go do the project, so that cannot be measured, the impact of the human capital. (Flavia, Honduran businesswoman, interview, 2009)*

As discussed in Chapter 2, although human capital is a term that is primarily used in economics to refer to the skills and knowledge of workers, in the context of the projecthonduras.com network, the term is used to refer to the "time, energy, expertise, experience, creativity, talents, contacts, and willingness" of a "engaged network of individuals and groups".

While the general definition of 'human capital' has changed little over the years, the people with the 'time, energy, expertise and experience' targeted by projecthonduras has changed significantly. As noted in the previous chapter, the network was founded on the idea of linking successful Hondurans in the US with needs in Honduras. The 'human capital' in this context was to be provided by Honduran-Americans with professional and educational skills and experience:

> *Honduras is in great need of all its resources, especially its human resources, to get on the road to development. And what better human resources than all the people who live in very highly developed countries where they have the advantage of having the best education and technology. Persons who have very good positions within those developed societies. And I am not talking only about*

money, on the contrary I am talking about knowledge that can be passed on to us

here in Honduras and in that way really help us to develop. (Godoy Bueso, 1999)

However, even from the beginning it was clear that North American volunteers were a key source of 'human capital' for Honduras:

> *There is a growing Honduran-American community in the US. Many of these people are professionals and students, self-employed, working for major corporations or attending colleges and universities.*

> *There is an even faster-growing community of North Americans with a close attachment to Honduras, partly as a result of volunteer efforts following Hurricane Mitch last year and partly owing to the rise in US private investment in the country's tourism industry. It is these groups that make up the "market" targeted by projecthonduras.com. (Press release from projecthonduras, May 1999)*

Marco clearly believes these individuals and their 'human capital' are the most effective means of providing development assistance to Honduras:

> *I want to express my gratitude to the tens of thousands of individuals, groups and organizations that have supported the people of Honduras this year through a wide variety of volunteer and humanitarian efforts. In my view, the "human capital" that you have selflessly contributed means more than all of the financial capital lent, given, or pardoned through official government-to-government channels. It is the type of capital that reaches the people who need it the most in the most efficient way... directly. Most importantly, it is this type of capital that establishes personal, long-lasting relationships that give people hope in the simple knowledge that they are not alone. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2008c)*

Clearly the mobilisation of 'human capital' is seen by projecthonduras as a promising alternative to conventional development programmes focused on the dispersal of financial aid. It is a large part of the reason projecthonduras can call itself an 'unconventional movement' and an 'alternative model'.

Projecthonduras People

> *Who is doing development work here in Honduras? At the moment, I am sitting*
> *here in a conference, Project Honduras, in the Copán Ruins surrounded about*
> *100 other people who also care passionately about the future of Honduras. These*
> *are people from all walks of life, young volunteers teaching English in local*
> *schools, experts who have been doing community development work for over 30*
> *years, church leaders, representatives from youth programs, water organizations,*
> *and HIV/AIDS projects. (Brigadesblog, 2009a)*

The people and organisations that make up projecthonduras are, somewhat
paradoxically, both diverse and homogeneous. The network includes Hondurans and
North Americans, some who are religious and some who are not, and people representing
NGOs, churches, academia, professional groups, government and military institutions
and private businesses. Yet, as noted above, the dominant impression when walking into
a projecthonduras conference – or indeed when undertaking both on and off-line
participant observation in the network – is one of homogeneity.

Unpacking this diverse yet homogeneous network is, perhaps understandably, somewhat
tricky. Unfortunately projecthonduras does not collect any quantitative data on who is
joining the network or using the network resources, and it is not possible to access this
data from the Yahoo forum membership lists. The discussion in this section is therefore
based largely on fieldwork data, including observation (online and offline) and
interviews, 'snapshot' data for the figures drawn from a list of participants at the 2008
conference on Honduras in Copán Ruinas[78], and data from a 2005 study of the network by
students from George Washington University (Chang, Jones, & Rozga, 2005)[79].

Although he may not collect much quantitative data on the network participants, though
daily interaction with the network, Marco has a clear idea of its constituency:

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[78] While the conference data cannot be generalised to the entire projecthonduras network and its various
forums, it does provide a picture of the people and organisations who attend the conferences - a vital part of the
projecthonduras network, and as such gives a good indication of the people who are involved. Participant
observation and fieldwork experience also indicates that the data in these tables is generally representative of
the network as a whole.

[79] This report is the result of a relationship between projecthonduras.com and the International Institute of
Tourism Studies (IITS) at the George Washington University in Washington, DC. It was based on survey
research by students at the institute as part of a tourism research paper. The aim of the survey was to investigate
the economic impact of volunteer travel by tourists connected through projecthonduras.com.

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Most of the people that come to our conference are North Americans, mostly from the United States, a few from Canada, occasionally you'll get a European. Very seldomly do we have anybody from Asia or Latin America apart from Honduras, so I would say about 3/4 are North Americans, and most of these North Americans are involved in a variety of groups such as medical brigades, churches, universities, a fair number of students... mostly people that are in their 30s and 40s and 50s but almost all of them are volunteers.

I would say maybe 50% of these groups are faith based groups representing churches or just different religious organisations. I would say maybe 1/3 or 1/4 are Hondurans and I think that has been our weakest point, we haven't been able to create more excitement within the Honduran population, and part of that is just being able to get the message out in Spanish. (Marco, Radio Bruce interview 17/8/2009)

Figure 12 illustrates the dominance of participants from the USA in the projecthonduras network. The chart shows the 2008 conference participants 'country', as indicated when they registered for the conference. As the registration form simply asks for 'country' and is in the context of organisational details, the answers are likely to relate to the base of operations for the organisation the participant is affiliated with. In fact over a third of the participants who listed Honduras as their country are people known to me as North Americans who are living and working, permanently or temporarily, in Honduras. Therefore the chart is not an accurate indicator of the nationality or ethnicity of participants. Nonetheless the chart has been included here as it does illustrate very clearly the bi-national nature of the network, and the significant numbers of US Americans involved.

The dominance of North Americans is also reflected in the George Washington study. Although the study survey had only a 27% completion rate, 92% of those respondents were from the United States. This may be reflective of the fact that the survey was in English and online but such an overwhelming majority is still strongly indicative of the North American nature of the network. The same study also showed a clear majority earned over US$60,000 annually, reflecting the middle class nature of the network.

Figure 12: Country of Residence for delegates at the Conference on Honduras 2008
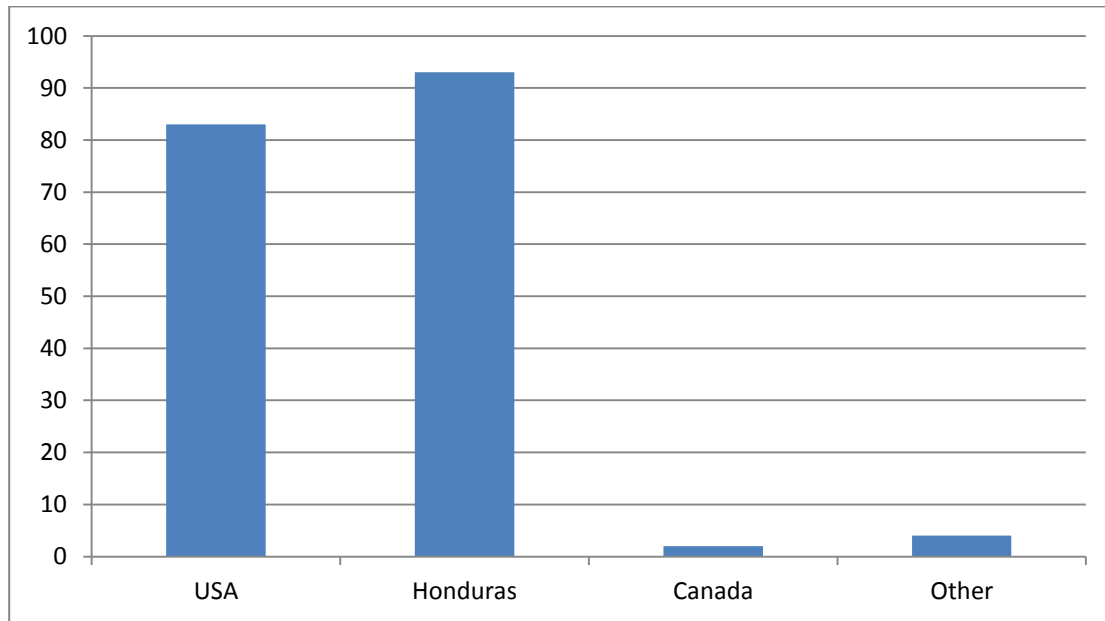
So Where are the Hondurans?

While Figure 12 shows that over half the participants at the 2008 conference were likely to be resident in Honduras, as noted above, many of these are actually North American. Marco (in the quote above) estimates just one quarter to one third of projecthonduras participants are Honduran. However while the number of Honduran participants at the conference appears to be increasing, few are participating in the online forums. In the six months from March - August 2009 just four out of 165 posts on the Yahoo forums were from Hondurans, and three of these were posted by Marco (presumably mailed directly to Marco who then posted them on the list). This lack of Hondurans in the network is not for lack of trying on Marco's part:

> *You cannot imagine how much time we've invested in attracting Honduran*
> *interest. We've not been successful in this regard. But it is not for lack of trying…*
> *I am sensitive to the need for more of a Honduran focus. That is why we made the*
> *decision to move the Conference to Honduras in 2003. It would have been a lot*
> *easier for me to keep the event in Washington, DC. Also, the simultaneous*
> *translation services and equipment are a huge expense for us, but one which we*
> *believe is incredibly important – mainly for making Hondurans feel at ease and be*

> *able to understand everything and participate. (Marco, personal communication, 2011)*

So where are the Hondurans and why aren't they participating?

The discussion in Chapter 5 casts some light on this question. The North American origin of the founders and leaders (Honduras-born but educated and resident in the USA) and of the network itself, the initial emphasis on linking Hondurans in the USA rather than Honduras, and the location of the first three conferences in Washington DC are key factors in explaining the initial lack of interest from Hondurans in Honduras.

Other reasons for the lack of Hondurans were identified in Chapter 7, and include language and Internet access issues. Despite Marco's efforts to make them comfortable, the dominance of the English language within the website and forums and at the conference is clearly a limitation:

> *I presented (at the conference) in Spanish, we have another person who can translate for me. But all the people inside speak English... I tried to speak English, and I tried to hear the conference but for me it's difficult, it's like a handicap. I think it (the projecthonduras conference) is good, you can find very nice people... maybe help, but in that moment maybe my problem was communication. (Miriam[80], Honduran development professional, interview, 2010)*

Internet access issues (although this is rapidly improving), knowledge of the network (it is not widely known about outside of expatriate circles) and the cost of attending the conference are all significant factors, something many non-Honduran participants are aware of.

Despite this there are significant numbers of Hondurans participating in the conferences. The Conference on Honduras averages around 200 participants, so one-quarter to one-third of participants is about 50-66 Hondurans per conference. These are mostly local employees and volunteers in expatriate-led NGOs, directors of small Honduran NGOs and church leaders. These people come to the conference because they have been invited by employers or colleagues (in 2008 and 2009 Marco actively encouraged conference attendees to bring their Honduran co-workers to the next conference), or because they are

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[80] Pseudonym

actively seeking help, often financial assistance, for their own organisations. This was the reason Miriam (quoted above) attended, despite her language limitations:

> *I went there because we need to have a lot of different projects, rural development projects or local economic development, and I want to find a person who can help me... to find a funder. (Miriam, Honduran development professional, interview, 2010)*

While Honduran (and non-Honduran) participants who attended the conference looking for financial assistance were usually disappointed, most Hondurans who attend the conference indicated that it was largely a positive experience (some of the positive outcomes they identified were highlighted in the previous chapter, including raised awareness, resources and partnerships, and teaching and learning). They often return, bringing colleagues and with plans to best make use of the contacts they make at the conference:

> *In my next attendance to the conference I will change my presentation style. Even if the people sponsoring me (for the last conference) don't pay my conference fees (for the next conference), I'm not going to just present statistics but also photos and stories and realities... the positive impacts of NGOs (Manuel[81], Honduran Development Worker, interview, 2009)*

Most active Honduran involvement occurs at the conference. Few Hondurans post to the English-dominated Yahoo forums, although Marco's friend list on Facebook (which at the end of 2010 had 2000+ 'friends') includes hundreds of Hondurans, many of them young people who interact regularly online. However, to date that interaction does not seem to have led to significant involvement with the core of the projecthonduras network.

The question of Honduran involvement is returned to in Chapter 9 as although pragmatic reasons such as cost and language are clearly causes for the lack of Hondurans in the network, they are also symptomatic of deeper underlying issues related to the development ethos and politics of the network. It is also suggestive of the way in which the role of Hondurans and expatriates in projecthonduras, and in development in Honduras, is constructed.

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[81] Pseudonym

***The "Gringos"*[82]**

As should be evident from the discussion in the thesis to this point, projecthonduras quickly became a network for North Americans working in, or interested in Honduras, with up to three-quarters of participants in the network being of North American origin. Most of these 'gringos' are volunteers with small NGOs or church groups, who are either resident long term in Honduras, or who return to Honduras on a regular basis. Many are education or health care professionals, although there are also students, pastors, engineers and others groups represented. They are almost overwhelmingly white, middle class and protestant.

Heart for Honduras

Perhaps the main characteristic that participants in projecthonduras hold in common is a passion, and compassion for Honduras. Marco terms this the "heart for Honduras", describing projecthonduras participants as individuals with and affection for and life-long commitment to the people of Honduras:

> *projecthonduras.com is not like some new diet fad that you can get tired of and go one to something else. It is meant to be a way of life, a life-long mission for those who have developed affection for Honduras. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2006b)*

This 'heart for Honduras' generally develops through a personal encounter with Honduras and Hondurans. Participants witness the poverty of Hondurans and feel drawn to do something to help. Participants largely became 'witnesses' to poverty in one of three ways. Firstly, many have visited Honduras on a short term trip (including short term volunteers who arrived following Hurricane Mitch) or holiday. Others, including Marco, are linked to Honduras through their family roots or through marriage. A third, smaller but still significant group may not have any prior connection to Honduras but made a commitment to work there after feeling they had been "called by God". Religion plays a significant role in projecthonduras and will be discussed further later in this chapter.

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[82] The term "Gringo" is commonly used in Honduras to refer to North Americans. Although it is sometimes used is a disparaging manner, its use is usually descriptive and it is frequently used by participants in the network to identify themselves. It is in this sense that I use it in this thesis.

Marco considers having a 'heart for Honduras' to be foundational to the projecthonduras model:

> *So if you get people communicating, if you get people passionately involved in Honduras, because they travelled here, because they married somebody here, because they've fallen in love with a kid they met on the street, the money will start to flow, have faith, lots [of] faith based groups here....but you got to get that relationship started. (Marco, speaking to Conference on Honduras, October 2008)*

This love for Honduras has led many of the expatriates involved in projecthonduras to make considerable personal sacrifice to do the work they do. Some have given up careers and comfortable lifestyles to relocate to Honduras and work in volunteer or low paid positions in poor communities. Many are still in the US but give up substantial vacation time to travel to Honduras, or spend weekends and evenings fund-raising or working on Honduras- related projects. There is arguably little personal or financial gain to be made from volunteering in Honduras, although participants highlight the social, emotional and spiritual benefits of the work they do.

As noted, what is driving this 'heart for Honduras' is usually a personal connection and relationship with Hondurans. As discussed in Chapter 6, this relationship is one of the areas of great promise within projecthonduras, however it also one of concern as 'gringos' are often cast in the active role in the relationship with Hondurans as passive recipients. This quote from Paulina illustrates this dichotomy:

> *I'm always amazed and humbled by the dedication of individuals to find a solution to the poverty they've been witness to in Honduras, by the inspiration they've found in the people and communities that they've reached out to. So, in a way, what gives it life not only is the dedication of those who are part of the network but also the people in Honduras who are open and receptive to those energies, and who welcome it into their lives. (Paulina, co-founder, email interview, 2009)*

This construction of the differing roles of Hondurans and expatriates, and the potential for paternalism inherent in the 'heart for Honduras' is discussed further in the next chapter. What is important to note here is that participants in projecthonduras have

witnessed the poverty, and been inspired to commit a significant chunk of their lives to helping Honduras.

Volunteers & Social Entrepreneurs

Whatever their reason for becoming involved in 'helping' Honduras, most participants in projecthonduras have maintained a long term involvement in Honduras, either founding a non-profit organisation themselves (mostly schools, health clinics and community development organisations.), or becoming involved in existing ones as staff or volunteers. This commitment is one of the great sources of promise in the wider projecthonduras network, as relationships are formed between Hondurans and "Gringos", leading to long term partnerships and involvement in Honduran communities.

These long term volunteers are highly are entrepreneurial, both in the literal sense (as the founders of social enterprises) and in a more figurative sense, as people who take the risk of launching new organisations and projects themselves[83]. An example of this is Rodger Harrison, who visited Honduras to learn Spanish and ended up forming a charity to address the needs he saw there:

> "*I originally started going up in the mountains (in Copán, Honduras) and taking school supplies and books and some medicines when I could,*" *recalls Harrison, a paramedic from North Carolina who'd first come to Honduras to study Spanish. "But we never really formed an official charity until Hurricane Mitch, when we started to get donations from people who wanted to help"... Beginning at the end of 1998, Harrison started amassing a corps of volunteers and soliciting any kind of supplies that would help. He now has more than 120 active volunteers in Honduras, with more working Stateside. (Erich, n d)*

As illustrated by Rodger's story, many of these people have become NGO directors somewhat unintentionally, when small scale independent efforts to bring supplies or assistance to communities in Honduras grew to need formal organisational structures. However although there is now a core of these non-profit directors in projecthonduras (see the descriptions of the Micah Project, Students Helping Honduras and Clinica

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[83] I draw on Alvord, Brown, & Letts (2004) and Brinckerhoff (2001) to define social entrepreneurs as people who create innovative initiatives, build new social arrangements, and mobilise resources in response to social problems, and who are willing to take risks to serve people better,

Esperanza later in this chapter), there are also still many independent volunteers in Honduras and networking through projecthonduras.

Rodger's story also shows the way in which the numbers of personnel in these organisations grow, many attracting significant numbers of short and long-term volunteers and recruiting both local and expatriate staff. These volunteers and staff often also become involved individually in projecthonduras, frequently after being encouraged to participate by the director or founder. For example, increasingly at conferences, organisational directors will send staff or volunteers (Honduran and expatriate) to network and learn (see the Micah Project section later in this chapter for an example).

There have been a few instances where the employees of larger organisations have participated in projecthonduras although this is relatively rare. When they do, it is often as individuals (with the exception of government and military groups). There have also been instances where the spouses of government and INGO personnel have posted to the forums looking for assistance with small projects they have undertaken as individuals. While unusual, this does illustrate an interesting point; while organisational affiliations are important – and indeed will be the focus of much of the remainder of this chapter – the basis of participation in projecthonduras is the individual. Organisations cannot 'join' the projecthonduras forums, only individuals can. It also highlights the fact that while most in the network are engaged in non-profit work, the type of individuals likely to participate in projecthonduras are often highly entrepreneurial in the general sense; individuals with ideas who take the initiative and risk of forming their own project, organisation or venture.

While many individuals in projecthonduras are entrepreneurial in the general sense, there is also a small but growing group of social business owners represented in the network. These individuals have founded their businesses with the goal of either using the profits for development work (through financing an existing NGO or running their own projects) or of using the business to invest in training and development of their employees. One example of this is Chris, a US American social entrepreneur who founded a business expressly to provide funding for the non-profit Micah Project:

> So I just started brainstorming with the Micah Project folks, and one of the things
> I threw out there was is there some sort of Honduran business that exists, that

would generate a profit, and start to fund the Micah Project, (and) hopefully grow
over time so it could take over more and more of the Micah Project's budget and
essentially introduce a level of sustainability into their financial model that isn't
there currently. So that was ... the origin of the company I am now founding
(Chris, US American social entrepreneur, interview, 2008)

Although there is considerable enthusiasm within the network for social enterprises such as Chris', these types of organisations are clearly in the minority, and volunteers and the employees of non-profit organisations make up the bulk of the network. Many of these are in small NGOs such as the one founded by Rodger, although there are also a significant number of people from universities, Rotary clubs and churches (see Figure 13 and discussion later in this chapter). These are often medical, education or technical professionals with the time, financial resources and institutional support necessary to volunteer in Honduras on a regular basis.

Missionaries

Before moving on it is important to briefly discuss one other type of expatriate individual in projecthonduras, the missionary. Although, as noted above, many participants in projecthonduras are in Honduras as they feel "called by God", many of these would call themselves aid workers or volunteers rather than missionaries. However there is a significant group of evangelical and Episcopalian missionaries who participate in projecthonduras, and a scattering of other denominations (see Figures 16 and 17). Most are resident long term in Honduras, work with established missions and Churches and are involved in various development projects. Although overt proselytising is generally frowned on within the network, missionary participants participate in order to learn and to grow their development efforts, as well as to make contacts with other like-minded individuals, forming a sub network of missionaries within the projecthonduras framework. The role of Christian missions and religion in the projecthonduras network will be discussed further in the section on religion at the end of this chapter).

Do-ers

As the following quote indicates, according to Marco there are three types of people in the world; those that criticise, those that stand on the side-line and cheer, and those that get in and get involved to make a difference:

> *The third is the kind of person who understands that government and other institutions are only tools to address and hopefully solve the problems of society, and that it has nothing to do with being negative or positive but being practical and simply locating the tools that work. Armed with the realization that there are other tools, methods, or models for solving problems, that third person will then proceed to get involved personally to make a difference. (Marco, Facebook note, April 2009)*

From the preceding discussion it should be becoming clear that the people who get involved in projecthonduras are the third type, something recognised by Marco's wife Barbara at the 2009 conference when she referred to conference delegates as "do-ers" and "good Samaritans". The entrepreneurial and constructive orientation of individuals in the network is neatly in line with the philosophy of being constructive and doing the do-able.

While projecthonduras clearly casts 'do-ers' in a positive light, the same individuals are often more pejoratively called 'do-gooders', reflecting the controversy that surrounds the work of foreign development workers and missionaries in many contexts (as discussed in Chapter 2). It also reflects the moral judgements and paternalistic nature of some aid, development and mission work, a paternalism that is also present in the discourse of projecthonduras, something which will be discussed in some depth in the next chapter.

Projecthonduras may have set out to link Hondurans in the US with needs in Honduras, but it is clear that after a decade of operation its main role was linking US Americans with a 'heart for Honduras' with each other. While given the diverse and fluid nature of the network it would be misleading to attempt to define an 'average user', the majority are clearly white, middle class and from the USA. A significant percentage are Episcopalian or evangelical Christians. The dominance of "gringos" is why, walking into a projecthonduras conference, the impression is of homogeneity, of a room full of white, middle class North Americans. However within that homogeneity is significant diversity. These "gringo" participants in projecthonduras, founders and directors, volunteers and

employees, are involved in a wide range of projects and organisations, and this will be the focus of the second half of this chapter.

Organisations, Projects and Programmes

The preceding discussion has unpacked some of the characteristics of the people in these organisations, but it is relevant here to look at the characteristics of the organisations themselves. As with the discussion of people in the network it is difficult to accurately quantify the size and types of organisations in projecthonduras, but it is possible to build a picture of the organisations in projecthonduras through participant observation, and from conference attendance lists and organisational websites.

The organisations linked to projecthonduras are predominantly non-profit NGOs, although as previously indicated a range of organisational types are represented, and these organisations are involved in a variety of different activities. Figure 13 shows a breakdown of the organisational types represented at the 2008 conference, which demonstrates very clearly the dominance of NGOs within the network, with 57 NGOs represented at the 2008 conference. Figure 14 highlights the primary type of work undertaken by organisations at that conference, indicating that although most can be classified as NGOs, there is significant diversity within the activities of the organisations represented.

One of the factors that stands out strongly from this breakdown of the organisations and the preceding discussion is the number of small organisations represented, and the contrast of the government involvement. Also evident in earlier discussions is the focus on health, education and community development projects. The next section of this chapter will examine these organisational types and foci, before moving on to discuss the position of volunteerism and "social tourism"[84] in projecthonduras, something which is not so evident in the figures, but which features prominently in projecthonduras rhetoric and which is an important factor in the structure and activities of organisations within projecthonduras.

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[84] As noted in Chapter 3, "Social Tourist" is the term used within the projecthonduras network to refer to short term, expatriate volunteer tourists.

Figure 13 Organisational types represented at the Conference on Honduras 2008[85]
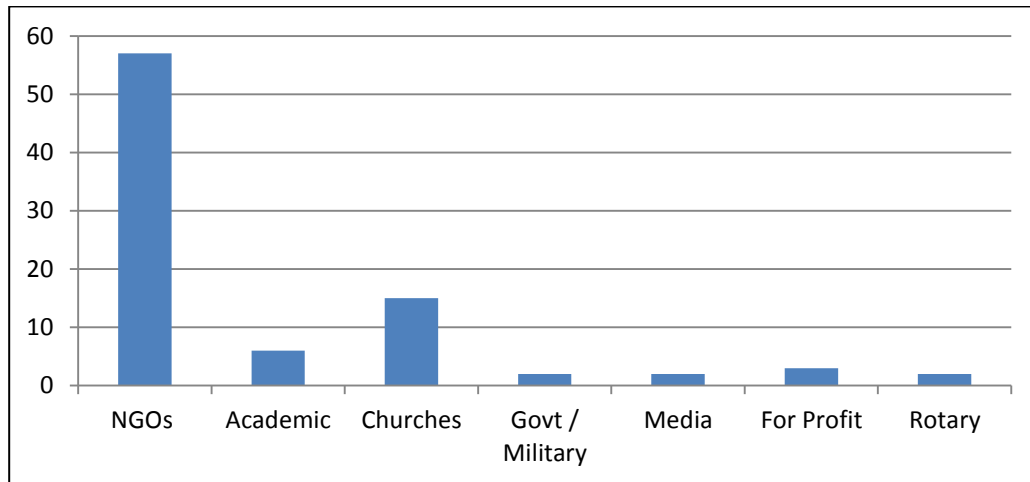
Figure 14 Type of work undertaken by organisations represented at the Conference on Honduras 2008
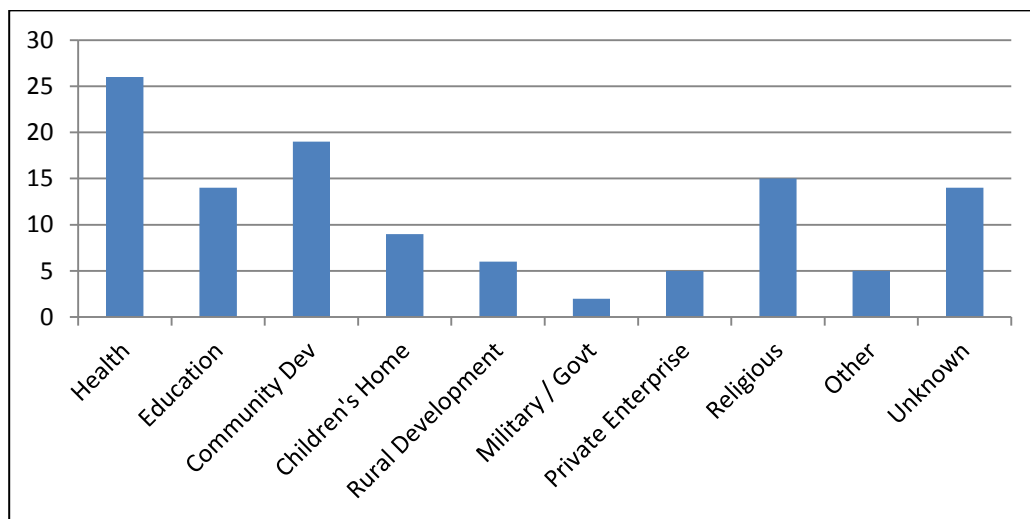
A network of small organisations

The picture of projecthonduras painted by the figures and discussion above highlight an ostensibly open network dominated by small, expatriate-led NGOs. Figure 13 shows just how significant NGO participation is for the network, with over three times as many NGOs as the nearest organisational type (churches) participating in the 2008 conference. Observations at the conference and analysis of the websites of these organisations indicate

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[85] Information for Figures 13 and 14 was collected by reviewing the organisational websites listed on the attendance list for the 2008 conference. Numbers are higher in Figure 14 than Figure 13 as many organisations are involved in two or more types of work.

that the majority of these NGOs are very small, with fewer than 10 staff or volunteers, and often active in only one or two locations.

This organisational type is of course directly related to the description of the entrepreneurial and do-er personalities discussed in the preceding section of this chapter. These organisations have arisen not from planned development intervention, but from the passion and compassion of the people that founded them. As such they are usually – at least initially – focused on very defined geographic areas (a village, a parish or a barrio[86] for example), and on a very small number of small scale projects, for example a school, well-drilling project or health centre. Some of these organisations do indeed scale up, expanding their work into new communities or bigger projects as the need and their capacity increase, but by and large they remain small, focused organisations. Although churches are listed separately in Figure 13, it can also be argued that this organisational type includes small mission groups, many of whom operate formal NGOs, while others work on small informal development projects within the bounds of the mission.

These small, expatriate-led, community based organisations plainly fit in Jackson's (2007) fourth tier of the development hierarchy (discussed in Chapter 2 and in Table 3), which includes the smallest bilateral organisations, and the hundreds of local and international NGOs and private voluntary organisations that undertake development work in Honduras, many of which are involved in the delivery of services that the Honduran government might otherwise provide. This fourth tier is often overlooked; Jackson argues that it holds the least power and influence in the Honduran development industry. However, as later chapters in this thesis will show, the power and influence of projecthonduras is increasingly significant.

While most NGOs in projecthonduras are small, there are some larger organisations and international NGOs (second and third tier in Jackson's hierarchy) involved. These are relatively few though; for example of the 57 NGOs represented at the 2008 conference just five were from INGOs (excluding major Christian Missionary organisations): Samaritan's Purse, MAP International, Kids Matter International, A Better World and Engineers Without Borders.

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[86] Barrio is the Spanish term for a neighbourhood, usually used in reference to lower class or impoverished urban communities.

The reason for this may lie in the purpose and activity of the network. As discussed in Chapter 7, the projecthonduras network is seen by participants primarily as a good place to make contacts and links with others working in Honduras. Smaller NGOs and missions often have limited in-country networks and knowledge and therefore value projecthonduras for networking opportunities, and for providing a space for them to meet with others doing similar work. INGOs, with their larger resources and extensive national and international networks, may not see the need to network with other organisations in the same manner.

There are other larger organisations involved in projecthonduras. Contrasting with the large number of small scale NGO participants is the increasing prominence of government agencies. Although generally not active in the online network the Honduran and US governments have both sent representatives to multiple conferences and their participation is lauded by most in the network. Their motivation for participation is however somewhat different to that of the NGOs. In the case of USAID this motivation includes a focus on finding partners through which to funnel money for smaller projects and to correct misconceptions of what USAID is and does. For the US Ambassador and Embassy staff it is, at least superficially, to provide information about their services and as part of a process of improving the image of the USA by promoting the work of US American citizens in Honduras. These motivations, and the type of development they typify, will be discussed further in the next chapter. The remainder of this chapter will focus on a deeper discussion of the groups that make up the core of projecthonduras: small, expatriate-led non-profits. To focus this discussion the next section profiles three such organisations, small organisations with a large influence within projecthonduras.

The Micah Project

> *Another great model is the Micah Project (http://www.micahcentral.org) in Tegucigalpa. This organization was started by Michael Miller and it has established wonderful models for dealing with street kids in Honduras, particularly "Resistoleros"[87] and even some gang members. Micah helped found a great project to help the people who live and work at the trash dump just outside of*

[87] Resistoleros is a term used in Honduras for children who abuse glue. It is derived from Resistol, the trade name of a leading brand of glue.

Tegucigalpa. They and other organizations, working together, have built a school nearby to teach and feed the children form the dump. I'm hoping Michael and some of the kids will speak at our conference, so others can emulate their experience. (Marco, comment on Pine, 2010a)

The Micah Project is a non-profit organisation based in Tegucigalpa. It operates two group homes for young men and boys, and an on-going outreach to street children. The young men and boys in the group homes, who are all from impoverished homes and most of whom have spent time living on the streets, are offered not only a home but a formal education. Christian training and opportunities to help others are also integral to the project (Micah Project, 2011). The goal of the Micah Project is overtly Christian: to support these young men to follow the tenets of Micah 6:8 of the Bible: "to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with their God". The Micah Project also has links to Villa Linda Miller, a community Michael Miller helped to build following Hurricane Mitch (and which the community named in honour of his mother); to Tegu Toyworks, the social enterprise founded by a former Micah Project volunteer to help provide a sustainable income for the Micah Project, and to education and welfare projects working with a community living on the city rubbish dump.

The Micah Project clearly maintains good links with projecthonduras, and is a key node in the network. As in the quote above, the organisation is frequently recommended by Marco as a model for development in Honduras, and an image from, and a link to the Micah Project feature on the homepage from 2003-2010 (see Figure 15).

As Miller noted to me during a visit to the Micah Project group home, "Marco has been good to us". Miller has been a regular participant in the network, contributing to the online forums and sending a contingent to the conference each year, often a new staff member as it considered to be a good way for them to make contacts in Honduras. In 2003, 2004 and 2005 some of the 'Micah boys' (ex-street children living and studying with the Micah Project) also attended and participated in the conference, sharing their stories with conference participants; and in 2005 five graduates of the Micah project received the first-ever Youth scholarship from projecthonduras and Special Missions Foundation. The founders of Tegu Toyworks, and volunteers from Villa Linda Miller and the dump project also frequently attend the conference.

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Figure 15: projecthonduras home page, 2009 (screenshot), with Micah Project & SHH links

projecthonduras.com is an alternative model of development for Honduras based on using information and communications technology (ICT) to identify, mobilize and coordinate all the available human capital.

By "human capital", we mean things such as time, energy, expertise, experience, talent, and contacts... resources that really only have value when people become personally engaged. It is this engagement that is the key to truly changing Honduras for the better because it has the effect of transforming the way we look at human beings in need. It creates an infectious awareness that pulls us, our friends, our relatives, our acquaintances, and our colleagues out of our apathy and isolation.

Our sense is that developing countries like Honduras rely too much on seeking the financial sort of capital. We see this process as inherently wasteful, inefficient, and unstable. It assumes that the public institutions tasked with managing and disbursing money function well. We begin with the opposite assumption.

- Newsfeed (Twitter)
- Network (connect to us)
- Conference on Honduras
- Honduras Aid Map

Michael Miller's Micah Project is helping provide a home, an education, and leadership training to ex-street kids in Tegucigalpa. Students Helping Honduras, founded by Shin Fujiyama and his sister, Cosmo, builds homes for families in Siete de Abril and and helps care for orphaned children in El Progreso.

Retrieved from www.projecthonduras.com, 7 May, 2009.

The links between projecthonduras, The Micah Project, Villa Linda Miller and Tegu Toyworks illustrate the way in which small expatriate organisations network in Honduras. Organisations are linked through personalities and events, forming tight sub networks, and there is a frequent flow of people through and between the organisations. However the Micah project is not only illustrative of the networks, it also illustrates the type of development models seen most frequently in projecthonduras and described above. It is a small organisation, providing care to about 20 boys at any one time, and with less than 20 staff (including volunteer interns, and local teachers, cook and guard). As is typical for many projecthonduras-linked organisations, it was founded, and is still lead by a US American, with most leadership roles held by expatriates. It is also a service oriented organisation; key to the development strategy is training the boys in the Christian faith to become Christian leaders and to do this the organisation provides them with shelter, food, and a formal education (with many students supported with scholarships to attend university in Honduras and the United States), as well as love and attention.

Students Helping Honduras

Another organisation frequently recommended by Marco is Students Helping Honduras (SHH), a non-profit, student-led organisation providing volunteer opportunities and fund raising for projects in Honduras. It has also featured on the projecthonduras homepage from time to time (see Figure 15). It was founded in 2005 by Shin Fujiyama and his sister Cosmo, students from Washington DC. Shin had had been inspired to raise funds for orphanages, schools and communities in Honduras after travelling there as a short term volunteer. Shin and Cosmo initially organised bake sales and penny drives to raise money for Honduras, and began arranging volunteer trips for student groups to Honduras. Over the next few years they founded and formalised the SHH organisation, and it grew exponentially. By early 2011, nearly 100 universities and high schools were involved with SHH, which had raised more than $1 million through bake sales, car washes and small donations, funds which went to partnering orphanages, schools and communities in Honduras. The organisation has received international attention, Shin

was selected as a CNN Hero in 2009 and appeared on the Larry King show in May 2009; and spoke at the TEDxKrungThep conference in 2010[88].

Students Helping Honduras is a more recent addition to the projecthonduras network but it has fast become a key node. Since 2007 the organisation has regularly sent a large contingent to the conference, including both North American and Honduran staff and volunteers. Following the 2008 conference, (where Marco encouraged people to talk to me about the links they had made through projecthonduras) I was approached by Cosmo, who gave me a list of organisations and people they had made contact with through projecthonduras. This included organisations that had helped them in the process of setting up SHH in Honduras, and an organisation they had assisted with fundraising (after hearing of their needs at a the 2007 conference). Shin is one of the most prolific networkers in projecthonduras, visiting over 20 children's homes across Honduras in 2008-2009 in preparation for their own work with children (many accessed through the projecthonduras network), and actively seeking advice and assistance both on and offline.

As with the Micah Project, Students Helping Honduras is a small, service-oriented organisation. It is involved in a range of projects around the city of El Progreso in northern Honduras. The organisation has helped an impoverished community to purchase land and build homes, and they run a micro-finance programme, provide scholarships for Honduran girls who wish to attend university, and have contributed to the construction of various schools and children's homes in El Progreso. The organisation offers several volunteer service trips throughout the year, with most volunteers being engaged in construction work. Most work is focused on direct provision of physical needs such as housing and clean water, and the organisation has a strong focus on education. Also similar to the Micah Project is the make-up of the leadership and staff teams, and much of the leadership is North American, although Honduran staff and volunteers have an important and growing role in the organisation.

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[88] TED (Technology Entertainment and Design) is a global set of conferences curated by the American private non-profit Sapling Foundation, focused on "ideas worth spreading". TEDx events are independently organised conferences associated with the TED brand and guided by the TED organisation

Clinica Esperanza

> *Ask anyone who has lives on Roatan who is making a difference and odds are, they will say "Peggy Stranges." ...Those who have (met her) relate stories of her commitment, perseverance, and dedication. (Borton, n.d.)*

While Clinica Esperanza doesn't feature as prominently in the projecthonduras discourse as the Micah Project and SHH, it is arguably also a key node in the network, and well known not just on the island of Roatan where the clinic is based, but across Honduras. Indeed, the name "Miss Peggy" (as founder Peggy Stranges is known on the island) was one of the first I became familiar with when I began research with projecthonduras. Peggy is the founder of Clinica Esperanza, a health centre on Roatan which began in 2002 on Peggy's kitchen table where she provided basic health services to the residents of two impoverished neighbourhoods. Peggy is a registered nurse who had retired to Roatan, but is very much a 'do-er', and found herself unable to ignore the medical needs she saw on the island:

> *Basically I felt that I could screen these people, and I had some medicines, and I felt like if I couldn't take care of them I had a backup, there was a hospital on the island, close enough that I could just take them in. (But) when I found some of the patients were coming back whether not treated, or mistreated, they would be given prescriptions and no be able to fill them or whatever and I thought jeez I can do better than this. (Peggy, interview, 2009)*

By 2011 the kitchen table clinic had expanded to a 4500 square foot clinic that included four treatment rooms, a laboratory, pharmacy, a birthing centre and a paediatric inpatient unit with 12-15 patient beds. In the process it became the busiest non-governmental medical facility in the Bay Islands, providing low-cost and free health and dental care to over 75 patients per day. The clinic was completely built by volunteer labour and donated materials. Fees are very low, about US$3.80 per visit including medications, and no one is turned away if they are unable to pay (the gap between patient fees and the actual costs of operations is bridged entirely by donations). The clinic employs approximately ten local staff, including medical and nursing and administration staff, and augments these with medical volunteers recruited internationally.

Peggy Stranges has attended most of the projecthonduras conferences since 2002, often with fellow staff from the clinic, and a contingent of other volunteers and non-profit representatives from the island. The non-profit and expatriate networks within the Bay Islands are tight; the relative isolation of the islands meaning organisations working there are more reliant on each other than similar organisations on the mainland; and the need to find contacts and resources using an external network such as projecthonduras is commensurately smaller.

While the clinic's position within projecthonduras and its use of the network it is somewhat different to that of the Micah Project and SHH, there are a number of parallels. As an expatriate-founded and led small non-profit organisation, the clinic is reflective of the predominance of such organisations within projecthonduras, and it clearly fits within the 'health, education and community development' paradigm promoted by projecthonduras, something which will be discussed in the next section. Finally, consistent with the other organisations profiled, and indeed most projecthonduras-linked organisations, the clinic is also concerned mostly with providing a service and is generally not involved in any advocacy, activist or emancipatory work.

Health, Education & Community Development

The profiles of the Micah Project, SHH and the Clinica Esperanza show quite clearly one of the defining features of organisations that are comfortable networking within projecthonduras; the focus on providing services, in particular services related to health, education and community development. As Marco indicates in the quote below this is a conscious decision by the projecthonduras leadership, underpinned by the constructivist philosophy of the network (discussed in Chapter 6):

> As for why we are only interested in education, healthcare, and community building, the answer is a practical one, and that is that we want to be specialists, rather than generalists. Given our limited resources, we believe that we can be most effective if we target certain areas. We are looking for the greatest returns on our investments of time and energy (... mainly because most of us are citizen volunteers). And we happen to believe that the greatest returns can be had by meeting the basic needs of people, which in our view include the ability to learn, stay healthy, and feel a "connectedness" to other human beings. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2003)

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Figure 14 shows the dominance of this type of work; 59 of 82 organisations (nearly 75%), are directly involved in some kind of health, education or community development project.

Health care projects feature most prominently. These include organisations like the Clinica Esperanza which operate permanent clinics, organisations that do health education and health promotion activities, and organisations that organise and facilitate medical brigades (short term medical teams). These brigades are one of the most common means of providing health care; of the 26 organisations involved in health care at the 2008 conference, 15 were active in bringing expatriate medical and health teams to Honduras. Some of these were small scale, churches and US-based health organisations bringing one or two teams per year, while others had larger scale operations, bringing a dozen or more teams annually. A few of these (at least three organisations at the 2008 conference) also have permanent clinics in addition to bringing medical teams, while seven operated permanent clinics only. It should be noted that many of the teams bringing brigades had long term connections with clinics and medical centres in Honduras, and varying levels of engagement with the Honduran Ministry of Health[89].

Education work also features prominently amongst projecthonduras-linked NGOs. Although there are fewer education than health-based projects represented, it features very strongly in the projecthonduras rhetoric, the implications of which are addressed in Chapter 9. Education projects undertaken by projecthonduras include operating schools, providing adult education and support for existing public and charitable schools. Of the 14 organisations involved in education at the 2008 conference, half directly operated schools; of these half were private bilingual schools (fee-paying but offering scholarships to poorer students) and the other half were operating fully charitable schools (free or with very low fees). The remaining organisations were by and large involved in supporting existing schools, schools within the Honduran education system or schools operated by local churches or NGOs.

Community development is a far more fuzzy term. In general, organisations identified as being involved in community development were involved in either construction projects (of homes, schools and other community buildings), water and sanitation projects or

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[89] Issues related to this are explored in more depth in my Master's thesis (McLennan, 2005).

micro-credit and small business support programmes. There are also a few projecthonduras-linked organisations involved in more diverse activities (from the small scale provision of eco-stoves to water filters, to larger projects such as electricity generation), and there a very few involved in advocacy and activist work such as civic and political awareness classes and projects to secure land title for poor Hondurans. Community development as a category can also be extended to rural development efforts, of which a handful of projecthonduras participants were involved. This includes agricultural extension and education projects, and environmental protection programmes.

As indicated above, the rhetoric of health, education and community development is a strong and persistent one in projecthonduras, reflecting the networks focus on 'doing the do-able'. This clearly makes projecthonduras a comfortable place to be for these types of service-oriented organisations but this charity-orientation also leaves the network open to criticism. This discourse, and the implications it has for the network will be discussed further in Chapter 9.

Volunteerism and 'Social Tourism'

> *There is a lot of wonderful work being done in Honduras by thousands of humanitarian and volunteer groups from all over the world, although most of them clearly come from the US. Of the roughly US$600 million in revenue generated by the tourism market in Honduras last year, projecthonduras.com estimates that anywhere between one-quarter to one-third is produced by the "social tourism" sub-market. These social tourists are a diverse crowd, but mainly they are compassionate foreigners who visit Honduras to perform short-term (1-2 weeks) volunteer work. They contribute their time, expertise, experience, talents, and other "human capital" which help to empower the people of Honduras in a wide range of areas, including education, healthcare, leadership training, clean water, micro-credit, care of orphaned or abandoned children, and community building. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2010a)*

The phenomenon of groups of US Americans, mostly church and academic groups, dressed in matching t-shirts, waiting at the boarding gates of flights to Honduras, was introduced in Chapter 3. These are the brigades, teams of church people, students or

professionals visiting Honduras to "help" for a few weeks, often in their vacation time. Although there are many Hondurans and long-term volunteers, and even some professional aid workers involved in projecthonduras, as noted earlier in this chapter, these brigades are one of the most significant groups of participants in the network. These volunteer groups are often referred to as 'social tourists' within projecthonduras (see Chapter 2 for a definition of social tourism):

> *An increasingly popular reason that people travel abroad is tied to a desire to perform volunteer work in developing countries such as Honduras….*
>
> *Each student, physician, church member, teacher, or businessperson who takes time off from their daily life to visit a foreign country to get involved in some sort of social service project has a certain image of himself or herself. Some think of themselves as humanitarians or missionaries. Others view themselves as adventurers or just volunteers.*
>
> *What most of these travellers have in common is that they are volunteers with a desire to give. Most get involved on a temporary or part-time basis. They fly to Honduras, spend a few weeks working on grassroots projects, take a few days to relax at a beach or mountain resort afterward, and then return to their homes and jobs. These people are "social tourists". (Marco, Facebook note, February 2009)*

Although few short term volunteers actually attend the conference or participate online themselves, many of the long term workers and missionaries who do participate are involved in organising or hosting such groups. The importance of these groups in projecthonduras was evident at the 2008 conference on Honduras where at least 70% of NGOs represented were involved in either sending or hosting volunteer groups[90]. Of these at least 56% were involved in sending short term groups (undertaking trips of four weeks or less) and 30% hosted or sent long term volunteers[91]. The prominence of short term volunteer groups in particular is evidenced by regular postings on Yahoo and Facebook highlighting upcoming missions:

> *Volunteers in Medical Missions (http://www.vimm.org) of Seneca, South Carolina, will sponsor a medical mission trip to Roatan during May 23-30, 2009.*

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[90] This calculation was drawn from the conference delegate list, the websites of participants and my knowledge of the organisations through interviews and participant observations.

[91] Several organisations sent or hosted both short and long term volunteers, hence the overlap in these figures.

This combined medical clinic and church building group will consist of 20 people flying directly from Atlanta to Roatan. The medical team of eight will be led by Drs. A. and C. The team will work on the northern end of the island in a new clinic built in 2008. The team will stay at the Church of God Dormitory and have food prepared for them by local cooks. The building crew will rebuild the Pensacola church destroyed by a hurricane. The local host will be Dr. O…

Please spread the word to anyone you feel might be benefit from the services that will be provided. (Marco, Yahoo post, 2009)

While it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine exactly what each group is doing, Marco clearly believes in the value of having expatriate volunteers in Honduras. This is echoed by many participants:

Marco also uses the term "Social Tourism." My wife and I have led a few mission trips where we travelled to Honduras to visit clinics, schools, hospitals, etc. just to learn the culture of Honduras. By experiencing the situation of the people in Honduras compared to the quality of life we experience in the United States often will cause them [other social tourists / volunteers] to be contributors to our cause. (Ted, US American volunteer, email interview, 2009)

Volunteers are involved in a variety of different projects, including construction and engineering projects, and Christian mission and training. However by far the most visible short term teams within projecthonduras are medical brigades. These may be offered by medical, religious or other organisations. The teams consist largely of health professionals, offering health services, which may include ambulatory, or family medicine clinics, surgical, dental, and ophthalmologic or other specialist services. These services are usually targeted at poor or rural populations, and are offered free or at a nominal charge. They often work with Honduran Churches or NGOs, although a few do maintain links with Honduran health services (McLennan, 2005).

Long term volunteers often arrive in Honduras for the first time as short term volunteers, and are recruited by and work within existing NGOs. These volunteers are often involved in education (as school teachers or teaching English), or health (including health professionals, and medical and nursing students on rotation in NGO clinics in Honduras). While few short term volunteers participate directly in the network (although team

leaders and NGO directors do), as discussed earlier in this chapter, many long term volunteers do, often sent by the organisation they are working with.

The projecthonduras rhetoric is almost universally positive about the role of short term volunteers. This reflects the enthusiasm of some of the volunteer tourism literature (Callanan & Thomas, 2005; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Wearing, 2001), however as discussed in Chapter 2 there is also significant criticism of their role (McGehee & Andereck, 2008; Raymond & Hall, 2008; Simpson, 2004). Even within projecthonduras there are many who see problems with volunteerism – particularly short term volunteer groups:

> *Medical missions are great, they're all good, student groups, I think it's great, but I think the students are the ones benefiting more, and there's always the argument about the money you spent to come here, would it not have been better used... then you have to question what is the real purpose those of these trips. And if the real purpose is to build awareness and to create humanitarian consciousness raising among people in other countries then I think it is terrific and they are doing a great job. But then you are kind of using Honduras as like a laboratory. It's like a dumping ground for all of these student groups and church groups and everything.... and is there harm being done. (Jackie, US American development professional, interview, 2009)*

> *Do some volunteer groups (mostly Medical Brigades, in my opinion) behave like black-market health care providers? They drop out of the sky with their Rubbermaid® storage bins loaded with medicines and descend on remote villages. Sure they help, sure they are needed BUT where is the sustainability and consistency.... Is there any support for my "one stays home" theory? I often meet large volunteer groups in which there are one or more members who are of no use to the project at hand, they are just came along for something to do (or sadly, something to brag about) and the money they spent could have been used to create a sustainable project or arrange for follow-up. (Michel, Canadian volunteer and business owner in Honduras, email interview, 2009)*

Despite this the idea of short term teams remains entrenched in the rhetoric of projecthonduras and in the practice of many of the organisations involved. As a result there is an on-going tension between the benefits of awareness raising and developing the

'heart for Honduras', and the issues associated with short term volunteerism, something Sally[92] (director of a health-related NGO) noted:

> *I don't think brigades are for the people that they serve I think brigades are for the people that come down in the groups. I started doing brigades, I did 14 years of brigades, I'm a slow learner... But if you take a brigade and each one of those people pay $1000 to come down and you've got 15 people that's $15000 … I could do a whole lot with $15000. However, I think brigades are life-changing situations for the people that come down and not only to help Honduras but to help the world. Unfortunately or fortunately the world is very small and the only way we are going to get along with each other is to know each other. (Sally, interview, 2009)*

It is this 'getting to know each other' that is one of the primary reasons why, in the face of significant criticism, Marco and projecthonduras continue to strongly support volunteerism and 'social tourism' in Honduras, and why Marco has over the last decade spent considerable time lobbying the Honduran government for more recognition of the work of volunteers in Honduras:

> *The beauty of social tourists is that they travel to Honduras because they've developed a love for the country through the personal relationships that they've developed with its people. These relationships have led many social tourists to feel a great affection for and sense of empathy with the Honduran people. It is a bond that is nearly impossible to break... which is why I think social tourists represent one of the most powerful sources of support for Honduras. (Marco, letter to Honduran Secretary of Tourism, July 2009)*

The other reason for supporting social tourism, particularly at government level is the economic contribution these groups make to the Honduran economy, which (as the quote at the beginning of this section indicates) is significant. Justification of the teams with reference to the economy is a construct of particular interest and will be further examined in the next chapter.

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[92] Pseudonym

Religion

As will be clear by now, religion is a strong motivating factor within organisations involved in projecthonduras. This is hardly surprising as historically Christianity has provided the roots for much humanitarian service throughout the world (Thaut, 2009), and religious involvement and religious beliefs have been shown to be associated with a greater likelihood to volunteer (Bussell & Forbes, 2002, pp.249-250). It is also consistent with the leading role of religious organisations in Honduran development, as discussed in Chapter 3 (V. E. Fuentes, 2009; Hoksbergen & Madrid, 1997). Indeed, for many individuals in projecthonduras their work in Honduras is not only about the affection they have for Honduras, it is also a "call from God".

Projecthonduras is not of itself a religious organisation, in fact religion is one area that participants are asked to avoid discussing within the network in order to minimise conflict. However the community has a clear spiritual dimension and much of the activity that occurs has a distinctly religious flavour. Marco himself identifies as a non-traditional Christian, and much of his writing is imbued with his spiritual beliefs. Christian jargon and religious references are frequently used at conference and in online forums; and up to half the participants in projecthonduras have a religious affiliation, which is reflected in the George Washington study of volunteerism in projecthonduras in which 65% of respondents were affiliated with a church or a religious group (Chang et al., 2005). It is also very clear in Figure 16. Once again drawn from the websites listed on the attendance lists from the 2008 conference, Figure 16 highlights the number of religious organisations represented, showing 37 as non-religious and 36 as religious. The 37 religious organisations are further broken down in Figure 17 by denominational affiliation (this includes NGOs with a religious base as well as church groups).

The Figures indicate that there was a roughly even split between religious and non-religious organisations at the 2008 conference, and that of the religious organisations just 10% were Catholic. Three-quarters of the religious organisations (that is roughly a third of all organisations) at that conference were Protestant, with the most being either Episcopalian or Evangelical. This is interesting in light of the fact that Honduras is a predominantly Catholic nation, and perhaps reflects the North American dominance of projecthonduras.

Figure 16: Religious orientation of organisations represented at the Conference on Honduras 2008
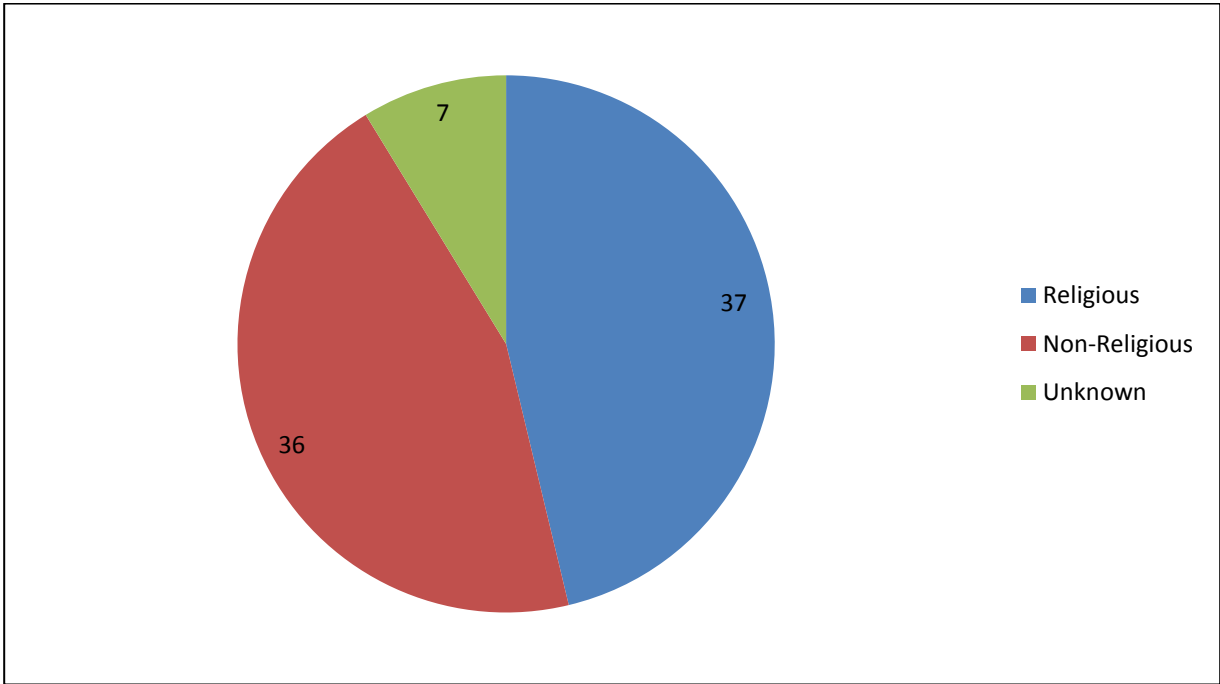
Figure 17: Denomination of Christian organisations represented at the Conference on Honduras 2008
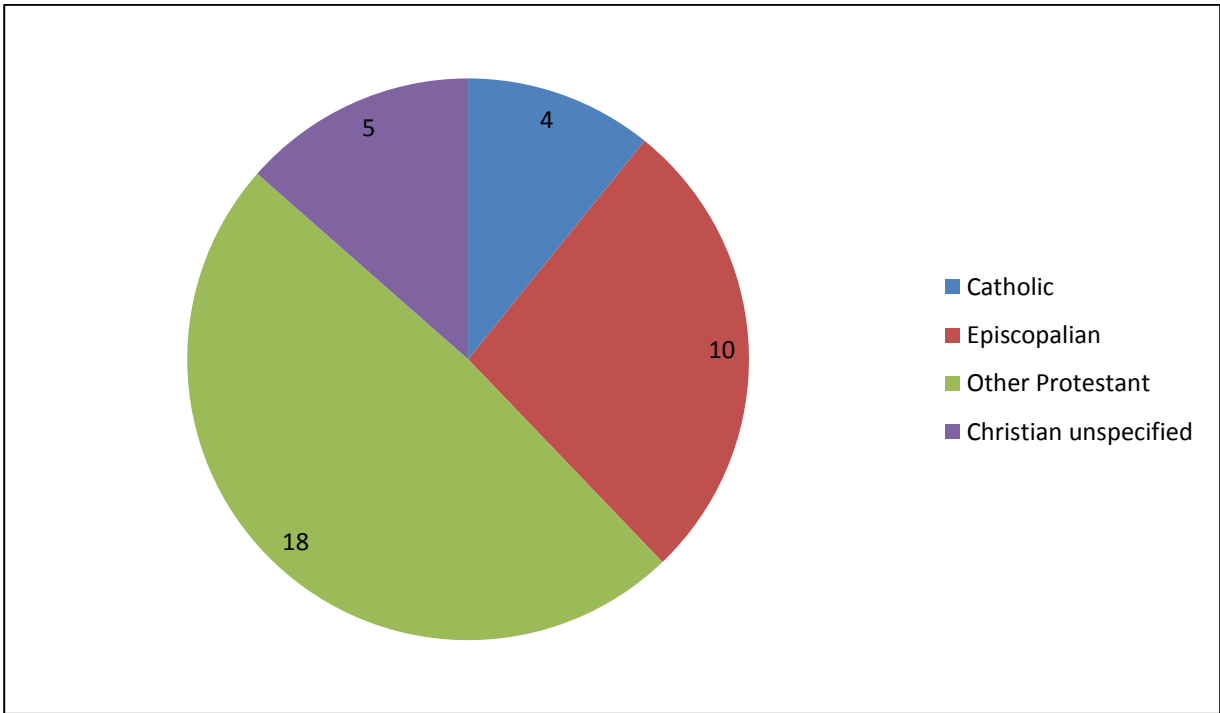
John, a North American Catholic lay worker in Honduras, noted this absence of Catholics, and describes the 2009 conference as having a strongly evangelical undertone:

> *Honduras is overwhelmingly Catholic, but there are very few Catholic participants... Many are evangelicals and have a strong conversion theme underneath. (A Honduran there this year was trying to have me make a statement of personal conversion to Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Saviour during a good conversation we were having… (John, email interview, 2009)*

Religious discourse, including evangelical references, is certainly strongly present at the conferences and in the online forums. Speakers at the conferences often use religious jargon and themes in their presentation. An example of this was a speaker at the 2009 conference who clearly stated that her primary desire was for the for children served by her organisation to "find Christ", and who very openly and confidently said her organisation was looking for "spiritual networking" and "prayer"; that they want to "bless other ministries", and that they believed that "through God's power Honduras can be changed". This public declaration of religious themes was unchallenged; indeed it seemed to sit quit comfortably within the conference environment.

However while evangelical themes and language are common within the network, only a small number are concerned with proselytising. This statement by Lynn, a missionary living in Honduras, reflects the motivation and actions of most religious organisations in projecthonduras:

> *On our end, we are sponsored by the Episcopal Church. But in no way are we on a religious mission. The religious/spiritual part I would say is a response to our baptismal covenant- to seek and to serve Christ in all. Any religious conversion or deepening would be something that occurs within each of us as individuals and certainly not something that we DO to another. This is also very important to me. I am not concerned with converting, saving or in any way interfering with the religious/spiritual life of a Honduran. I hope that I might have a positive impact on someone's health or wellbeing. That is my goal. (Lynn, US American volunteer, email interview, 2009)*

While most projecthonduras-linked organisations are not active proselytisers, it is clear that religious organisations have a significant role in projecthonduras. It is also clear that these organisations are Christian, and predominantly protestant (Episcopalian or Evangelical). The impact of this largely Protestant world view will be examined the next chapter.

Summary

This chapter has profiled the projecthonduras community; both the individuals that make up the network and the range of organisations they represent. This, paradoxically, is a diverse yet homogenous community, of volunteers, missionaries and social entrepreneurs drawn together by a shared 'heart for Honduras' and a drive to do the 'do-able'. There is clearly great promise in the love these people have for Honduras and the relationships that have developed between these largely expatriate volunteers and the Honduran communities they serve. These are people with a strong motivation to serve and to do something to help meet the needs they see in Honduras. Yet, as with previous chapters in this thesis, throughout this chapter there are shadows, hints of a critique – of the dominance of the outsiders, the nature of the work undertaken and the discourse underlying that work and the very presence of these groups in Honduras. These shadows will be the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter 9: Doing Development: In the Shadows of Projecthonduras

Much of the thesis to this point has been a thick description, giving a deep and detailed discussion of the projecthonduras network. This discussion has centred on the history, purpose and structure of the projecthonduras network and in light of the positive nature of the network has for the most part been framed 'appreciatively'. However not all has been light and promise, and it should be clear by now that there are some deep and significant shadows. This chapter, and the next, address some of those shadows, peeling back the layers of the projecthonduras discourse, in much the same way as Chapter 7 peeled back the layers on the structure of the network, in order to build a picture of the way in which projecthonduras and the people and organisations within the network view Honduras and Hondurans; and how it conceptualises development and the role of foreign organisations and volunteers in Honduras. In doing so it highlights the mainly charitable and paternalistic nature of the projecthonduras model.

This unpacking and examination of the perceptions and the mental structures that underpin the projecthonduras model is done through an analysis of some key texts from the website, forums and Facebook as well as from the websites of key organisations in the network. In particular, the discussion in this chapter draws from an analysis of the document "*Creating an unconventional movement for change in Honduras*", an essay outlining the reasons for establishing the projecthonduras network, written by Marco and first published on the projecthonduras.com website in November 1998. This essay has been periodically revised and reposted, with the most recent version posted to the *Honduras Weekly* website in August 2010 (the 2010 version is reproduced in Appendix 5, and all unreferenced quotes in this chapter are drawn from this essay). This analysis also draws from Yahoo forum posts, Facebook updates, blog posts and articles related to projecthonduras posted on *Honduras This Week* and *Honduras Weekly*. This data set, focused as it is on the way projecthonduras and the organisations within the network

portray themselves rather than what they do, provides a fascinating insight into the construction of the projecthonduras 'alternative model' for development[93].

Problematising Honduras

While the philosophy of projecthonduras calls for a positive and constructive approach to development this does not always seem to be apparent in the network discourse. Depictions of Honduras and Hondurans are largely negative, creating a picture of a nation unable to help itself and a people condemned (though their own actions or those of others) to a life of poverty and misery. While this chapter does not argue that there are no problems in Honduras (indeed the myriad of political and development challenges Honduras faces is explored in Chapter 3), it aims to highlight the imbalance in the discourse and rhetoric of projecthonduras, and to unpack some of the assumptions and underlying values and beliefs that drive such a pessimistic view of Honduran's ability to help themselves. In particular it focuses on the way in which this problematisation[94] of Honduras opens up a discursive space for the solutions posed by projecthonduras and the organisations in the network.

From the beginning of projecthonduras, Honduras itself has been cast as a problem to be solved. From his earliest trips to Honduras Marco noticed the problems in the country, and his interest was in exploring and understanding these, and finding a solution. As discussed in Chapter 5 it was this on-going interest, and the search for solutions that lead Marco to create projecthonduras. Chapter 6 showed that this search for solutions is framed in a strengths-based manner, looking for constructive solutions and working together to build on good work already being done. However a careful reading of the projecthonduras discourse raises some interesting questions about the way in which the problems in Honduras, and their solutions are discussed.

Contrary to the positive philosophy, within the network Honduras is almost invariably framed as a chaotic place of corruption and crime, wracked by poverty and lacking the

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[93] The last three chapters of this thesis have emphasised the voice of the research participants. The remainder is my analysis and response. As noted in the methods chapter, some may contest my interpretation and analysis. I welcome the opportunity for dialogue on this.

[94] The use of the word problematisation here is derived from Foucault, and is about the "development of a given into a question, (the) transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response" (Lemke, 2002, p.8). This is a process which does not deny that a given phenomenon is real but rather seeks to explore the way in which different things in the world are gathered together, characterized, analysed, and treated within a discourse.

ability to help itself. Honduran government agencies are roundly criticised and cast as a source of problems rather than as a part of the solution. Honduran solutions, including local NGOs, are conspicuous in their absence, both from the discourse and in the forums and conferences. Indeed the problematising of Honduras by projecthonduras and its associated organisations empties both the communities and the nation of Honduras of indigenous and local solutions and makes a space for outside agencies to provide the answers. This problematisation and the resulting solutions are the focus of the first half of this chapter.

Poverty

Key to understanding the way in which projecthonduras problematises Honduras is the way in which it frames Honduran poverty. The Honduras that projecthonduras sees and wants to help is poor, vulnerable and weak:

> *In Honduras, more than three-quarters of the population lives in poverty. Approximately half of the population is indigent or "dirt poor". In Honduras, an estimated 50,000 children die each year from drinking contaminated water. Of the two and a half million Hondurans of working age, only about one million are formally employed…*

> *Children in Honduras consistently miss weeks of school each year due to teachers striking for better wages or for wages that have not been paid to them for months. Even when they do attend classes, they struggle to learn because they are hungry or do not have access to basic materials such as notebooks and pencils. Honduran hospitals and clinics do without necessary medicines, supplies, and equipment. Communities throughout Honduras are losing their young people to emigration to the Honduran cities or to the US, and thus they are gradually being sapped of their strength and hope. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2008d)*

This picture of Honduras as poor and weak is reinforced on the websites of organisations associated with projecthonduras and in the conference presentations which make frequent use of descriptions, statistics and images of poverty, including photos of 'poor' Honduran children and homes. For example:

> *If anyone ever required proof that the Honduran economy is small, poor and weak, take a look at the following statistics...(Rosenzweig, 2010)*

Honduran families and communities are described in terms of lack: lack of money, lack of adequate food and housing; and a lack of good healthcare and educational opportunities. Poverty is also viewed as systemic, affecting all aspects of Honduran society, one participant described it as a 'cancer', that poverty is not just related to a few isolated problems but Honduras is poor because of "negative things" that pervade the country and its culture.

The issue of poverty also underlies much of the unconventional movement essay, for example:

> *Without a powerful, influential and motivated middle class, I do not believe Honduras will ever truly progress... How do you create a middle class in Honduras, when over 75% of its people are poor and are busy simply trying to survive from day to day? ... There exists relatively little left-over energy, time or money to invest in getting involved in ideas, projects that do not somehow improve your lot or the well-being of your family and friends.*

In this quote Honduras is portrayed as not only a nation of the poor, but one where people are busy simply surviving and not able to invest in their own future. Interestingly, the figure of 75% of Hondurans as poor is not referenced, although it is a commonly heard figure around Honduras and within projecthonduras. As noted in Chapter 3, the Honduran Institute of Statistics (INE) puts the number of "poor" in Honduras at 66.4% of the rural population and 55.4% of the urban population, with 35.9% classified as 'extremely poor' (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2007). While it may seem pedantic to be niggling over exact figures (no-one denies there is significant poverty in Honduras) the framing of the problem as pervasive (affecting three-quarters of the population) is a significant factor in the process of creating Honduras as a problem which needs to be solved.

The way in which the solution is framed here also reveals two related assumptions. The first is that development requires a significant middle class (the implications of this will be discussed further later in this chapter), and the second, that people who are poor and are working hard to try and survive are unable to invest in the development process in Honduras. This statement therefore not only characterises Honduras by its poverty and lack, it also effectively removes from Hondurans the ability to do anything for

themselves, and which begins to build the basis for the solutions offered by projecthonduras:

> *Certainly, there is always the underlying tone of poverty that exists and that,*
> *alone, is enough to sustain projecthonduras' presence. (Brian, US American*
> *NGO director, email interview, 2009)*

Crime, Corruption & Bad Governance

The emphasis on poverty is not the only way in which projecthonduras problematises Honduras. The network also accepts and uses a discourse of crime, corruption and bad governance, one which particularly vilifies the Honduran government and its institutions. This topic also reflects a national-level discourse of crime and corruption in Honduras[95]. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the objective here is not to argue these are not significant issues facing Honduras but rather to examine the way in which the individuals associated with projecthonduras understand these issues and use them in their discourse to construct a problematic Honduras that requires outside intervention.

Somewhat paradoxically, as discussed in Chapter 6, corruption, crime and bad governance are actually among the topics of discussion that are strongly discouraged within projecthonduras, as they are considered to be outside the realm of the 'do-able' for organisations in the network. Because of this they are rarely directly or publically discussed at the conference or on the forums, however they are constant, often unstated but implicitly understood, companions to discussions about Honduras within the network, and frequent topics of discussion within the wider projecthonduras network and community (particularly at the private level). They are also clearly present in Marco's unconventional movement essay:

> *Every time I return to Honduras for a visit or talk to someone who has returned*
> *from Honduras, I ask them..."Aha vos, y como están las cosas?" I always get the*
> *same answer. "The value of the lempira has gone down again. The price of frijoles*
> *is much higher. We're without electricity, water a few times a day." It's been the*
> *same old story for the past 40 years, or ever since I've been engaging my relatives*
> *and friends in discussions about why things are the way they are in Honduras --*
> *politically, socially, and economically.*

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[95] See Pine (2008) for an in-depth, ethnographic exploration of the construction of violence in Honduras.

I've heard about all the corrupt governments. I've heard about the destabilizing role of the military. I've heard about the inept tax system that fails to collect needed revenue from people of influence. I've heard about the lack of industrial development, the excessive dependency on agriculture. I've heard about the inequities of land distribution in the countryside. I've heard about malnutrition in children. I've heard about the difficulty in building an infrastructure in a country that is 80% mountainous. I've heard about the inherent laziness of Hondurans.

Amazing. There are never any shortage of answers as to what is wrong with our country. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2010b)

In this quote Marco is presenting the answers of his family and friends to the question of what is happening in Honduras. He is not presenting any objective 'facts', nor any analysis of the problems presented, just a simple rendition of non-critiqued constructions regarding Honduran social, economic and political problems that he has heard many times over in Honduras and from Hondurans. The authority he gives to these accounts is evident later in the essay:

As much as we love our native country, it is not unfair to say that most of the institutions in Honduras do not function efficiently or professionally--at least not like we're accustomed to seeing in the US. The fact that Hondurans commonly joke about ineptitude, corruption and greed within their government, the unprofessionalism of their military, and the lack of modern, diversified and internationally competitive businesses, means that there is at least an element of truth to it all.

Here Marco writes that it is "not unfair" to talk of inefficient and unprofessional institutions, justifying this with "the fact" that Hondurans joke about the problems in their country. He argues that because Hondurans are talking about it there must be an "element of truth". The presence of crime, corruption and bad governance in Honduras is something that is accepted as truth in an unquestioning and uncritical manner, and the implication is that it does not therefore need to be further examined or analysed. Indeed nobody within the network questions that Honduran politicians are corrupt, or that crime is rampant, or that Honduras lacks modern, competitive businesses.

This discourse of corruption, crime and poor governance directly leads to another key component of the projecthonduras discourse, the vilification of Honduran institutions, particularly government. As the quote above indicates, the government and other Honduran institutions are cast as corrupt, complicit in criminal acts and essentially unable to govern effectively. Marco is very clear in his assertion that Honduran institutions are not only incompetent and inefficient; they are incapable of addressing the problems in Honduras:

> *The Honduran government is a broken system. If you funnel money through that system, it will disappear... not necessarily through corruption, but mostly because of incompetence and mismanagement. (Marco, Facebook post, August 09)*

This assumption that the Honduran government is broken and unable to manage the development process is clear throughout the network, from conversations with volunteers and NGO leaders, to the projecthonduras website itself. In 2009-2010 the introduction to the network on the index (front) page of the website stated (Figure 2, Chapter 5):

> *Our sense is that developing countries like Honduras rely too much on seeking the financial sort of capital. We see this process as inherently wasteful, inefficient, and unstable. It assumes that the public institutions tasked with managing and disbursing money function well. We begin with the opposite assumption.*

Clearly, the assumption is that Honduran public institutions do not function well and to give aid to them is therefore wasteful and inefficient. This single, simple statement effectively problematises all Honduran institutions.

Emptying Honduras

The vilification of Honduran institutions is also part of a third aspect of the problematisation of Honduras, the "emptying" of Honduras. In some ways this is not so much a third aspect, but the outcome of the focus on poverty, crime, corruption and bad governance, as the people of Honduras are considered to be unable to look after themselves or each other, and the government and institutions are seen as unable or unwilling to look after them:

There's just no follow through. Nobody does what they say what they're going to do. And it's not expected... most Hondurans don't want to help other Hondurans. (David B., US American volunteer, interview, 2009)

I remember about a month or two ago Marco asked … what Honduras really needs? ... and that was really helpful to me because I got to think about it in one sentence…. (what) I realised what it was that I believed in and what I thought made a difference… was the problem in the clients that I see... the lack of role models. This is a whole country without role models. (Vicky[96], Canadian NGO Director, interview, 2009)

However the discourse that results in the 'emptying of Honduras' is deeper than this, and results in the exclusion of most local and indigenous development solutions from the Honduran development landscape.

The concept of "emptying" as it is used in this thesis is drawn from Anna Tsing (2005, p.94) who talks about the emptying of places and nature of people, folk knowledge and diversity of flora and fauna; in order to make places into frontiers or parks, and to make it a place where claims can be made. Tsing in turn draws from Pratt (1992), who argued that in order to encode the frontier as suitable for capitalist "improvement" the European eye produces subsistence habitats as "empty" landscapes, meaningful only in terms of their potential for producing a marketable surplus. It is in this sense that the discourse of projecthonduras and its associated organisations fill the purpose of emptying, specifically emptying the Honduran community of past and present development and 'help' efforts, and particularly of local initiatives and mechanisms, in order for outside organisations to be able to claim legitimacy and a role in Honduran development.

A clear example of this are the claims of medical brigades who go to communities who have "no medical help", no clinic, no doctor, no access to health care. This, of course, gives a strong impetus to the desire to help, and urgency to the work the brigade does. The logic is that if we don't go to this community they will not have health care, they will get/stay sick, and they may die. In my experience as a researcher and volunteer this is rarely the complete truth; in some cases it is blatantly untrue (for example where health services do exist but are either unknown or not trusted by the volunteers), while in others it may have some element of truth (for example where there is only a nurse-led clinic actually in the

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[96] Pseudonym

village and the nearest post with a doctor is two or three hours away) (McLennan, 2005). Regardless of the 'truth' what is interesting and important here, and what Tsing draws out, is how this ignorance or dismissal of local systems and knowledge opens the way for outsiders to make a claim. By stating that this community has no health care they set the stage for the moral imperative to provide health care. Acknowledging local systems would mean recognising that either the brigade is not necessary, or that it must work with local practitioners and providers in care provision. Both of these options of course mean the outsiders lose the moral imperative to take charge.

> *It's difficult to gauge the impact of volunteer missions to Honduras. But it is clear that without the expertise and skills provided and the personal relationships developed through these missions, tens of thousands of Hondurans would not receive a wide variety of services, including medical, surgical, dental, and eye care. Many Hondurans would also not receive assistance with construction and water projects and efforts to care for and educate children. (Marco, January 2009.Facebook note)*

As this quote indicates, this emptying also works in other areas of development intervention, in part because the discourse of development organisations rely so heavy on a rhetoric of lack. For example much the focus on education within projecthonduras is based on the vilification of the school system, the inability of existing schools to provide quality education and the lack of schools and school equipment in certain areas (particularly rural areas). Community development efforts are also largely based on this same discourse, for example, the lack of water and sanitation systems, electricity, or of agricultural knowledge. What is clear is that organisations associated with projecthonduras tend to see Honduras in terms of lack. Despite a philosophy of constructivism and an ostensibly strengths-based approach, Honduras and Hondurans are rarely discussed in terms of what they have or their strengths, but are characterised by what they lack.

Related to this discourse of lack and of emptying is the question of the small number of Hondurans and Honduran organisations within the projecthonduras network (discussed in the previous chapter). Regardless of the reasons why Hondurans are not participating, their relative absence reflects the way in which the network discourse empties Honduras of local solutions. This is reinforced by the almost complete absence of Hondurans

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organisations in the projecthonduras discourse, particularly in relation to solutions for development. Unlike the government and large institutions, Honduran NGOs and civic organisations are not vilified. Rather these Honduran organisations are most notable for their absence, and as such another source of local solutions is emptied from the landscape.

Also largely absent from the projecthonduras discourse is any discussion of participation. This is despite the self-description of the networks as an alternative model for development. Participation (of development recipients in their own development) is one of the key concepts in alternative development discourse (Hart, 2001; McKinnon, 2007; Porter & Craig, 1997). Its relative invisibility in the projecthonduras discourse indicates that this is not considered a central part of the development model, although the related term 'partnership' is used frequently (usually in relation to partnerships between organisations in the network rather than with local agencies). This, alongside the emptying of Honduran development solutions, casts doubts on the claims to being an alternative model.

Despite this emptying of the development landscape and the concomitant risk that some organisations on the ground in Honduras are ignoring and going over the top of local providers, initiatives and survival mechanisms, I am aware that most organisations in Honduras need to work closely with locals and with the community in order to work at all. It is not the intention of this thesis to argue that partnerships between projecthonduras-linked organisations and local NGOs do not exist or are not important. What is important and interesting here is the discourse and how it seems to work very effectively as a rhetorical device which helps to establish the moral imperative to intervene. Emptying is a rhetorical technique which works to pave the way for outside organisations to work in Honduran communities. It is most likely at best a partial truth, at worst a fabrication, but it serves an important purpose in establishing the right of expatriate organisations to work in a particular community, and of projecthonduras to take the role of coordinator.

Problematising Development

> How do you go about changing major flaws in a country's most powerful
> institutions? Particularly when a country lacks the most powerful institution of

> *all for change -- a large, well-informed and well-educated middle class with wide access to capital. I think the answer is that you cannot...*
>
> *...My assumption is that profound change cannot occur in Honduras solely from within.*

As should be clear at this point, the solutions to Honduras' problems posited by projecthonduras and its associated organisations are driven by outsiders. The problematisation of poverty, of the perceived failure of Honduran institutions and the absence of Honduran solutions leads to the seemingly logical conclusion that outside help is required to address Honduras needs. This provides the discursive space, indeed the moral imperative, for outside organisations to not only get involved, but to lead the process of change in Honduras. But it is also important to note that this same emptying process is also applied to international institutions. This is clearly highlighted in the "unconventional movement essay":

> *...help from the outside such as economic aid and strategies for development from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank are not the answer. First, because assistance from international organizations usually comes with strings attached. Second, because all the assistance Honduras has received from these organizations for the past half century have not produced serious change for the country as whole. In some cases such as the agrarian reform efforts of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, World Bank development policies, for example, actually made things worse in Honduras by aggravating the situation between wealthy landholders and landless peasants.*

This argument, that traditional development assistance has not produced any serious change in Honduras, is one of the reasons why Marco founded the network. It was perhaps the first step in the problematisation and rhetorical emptying of Honduras, providing a rationalisation for the formation of projecthonduras. In particular Marco notes that development aid from the international agencies is usually tied (presumably) to the agencies' agenda; and that it not only has not produced positive change, in some cases it has worsened the situation. The criticism of international agencies is also linked to the criticism of the Honduran government as it is the financial capital produced by international agencies to Honduran institutions that is most critiqued by projecthonduras.

This critique is not dissimilar to the critique of alternative and post/anti-development theorists (discussed in Chapter 2). As with these critiques, the projecthonduras argument is that international capital transfers do not automatically convert into development progress, and that international agencies may be part of the problem rather than the solution (Escobar, 1992; Korten, 1987; Sachs, 1999). However the projecthonduras critique differs considerably when addressing potential solutions. Alternative development solutions, which highlight the role of individuals and groups within the target country as agents of development, clearly differ significantly from the projecthonduras solution which, faced by a Honduras emptied of local capacity, looks to outsiders for help.

As the following quote indicates, the projecthonduras solution is also far from the rejection of development that characterises much post-development critique:

> *Without delving into a long explanation of how this happened, I can say that generally the reason the policies of international organizations hurt our country is because they emphasize growth. Unfortunately, growth is not the be-all-and-end-all in an impoverished country... Development is. Believe it or not, there is a difference. I'll leave you to figure it out.*

So just what does projecthonduras understand development to be? And who are the agents of development in the projecthonduras model? These are questions that will be addressed in the next section of this chapter, which will explore projecthonduras' solutions to the problem of 'Honduras'.

Doing Development

The problematising and emptying of Honduras in the projecthonduras network is perhaps a good illustration of the arguments of post-development discourse, which highlights the way in which poverty, as a notion of 'lack' or 'deficiency', is constructed in a way that provides a rationale for the interventions of development (Illich, 1968; Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997; Sachs, 1999). In the case of projecthonduras, the discourse appears to go further than just problematising poverty and emptying the nation of indigenous solutions; it dismisses the solutions of international development agencies and governments. This is why Marco can call the network an 'alternative model', as it is one that is able to fill the gaps left by the absence of local solutions and the inadequacies of conventional ones.

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Despite the ostensibly noble aim of providing an alternative model for development, as previous chapters have hinted, the solutions offered by projecthonduras are not without their own critics. Perhaps one of the strongest is anthropologist Adrienne Pine who (with David Vivar) accused projecthonduras of Social Darwinism[97] in a 2010 article in the online newsletter Counterpunch (Pine & Vivar, 2010). Superficially at least, this accusation seems to be at odds with the nature of projecthonduras, whose aim has always been to build on the good work that is being done in Honduras. However Pine´s interpretation of the projecthonduras discourse is worth some consideration, particularly in relation to the problematisation of Hondurans, and the very white, North American, protestant community discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed this analysis serves to draw attention to some deep shadows in the projecthonduras model of development, and in the way in which the task of development is constructed by those in the network. However before discussing in more detail the way in which projecthonduras constructs the concept of development, is important to look again at the projecthonduras model, and in particular at who is identified as the agents of development and at the theory of social change promoted by the model (as per Table 1, Chapter 2).

Agents of Social Change: Whites in Shining Armour

In September 2010 Saundra Schimmelpfennig coined the term "whites in shining armour" on her blog *Good Intentions are Not Enough* to describe the phenomena of white volunteers in development contexts:

> *Our news coverage is so focused on Whites in Shining Armor that my sister-in-law, who is well-educated, reads two newspapers each day, and is an avid NPR listener, was surprised to learn that locally run charities exist outside of the Western world. Why did this surprise her? Because she never hears news stories about local non-profits.(Schimmelpfennig, 2010)*

While this is not a thesis about media portrayals of NGOs and development aid, the quote is apt here because it highlights a key issue in projecthonduras network, one that has

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[97] Social Darwinism developed from the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin and attributes differing stages in the evolution of human societies to biological distinctions among peoples (Mazrui, 1968). It had a strong influence on the development of modernisation theory, however it has increasingly become a "pejorative, polemical label" (Hodgson, 2004), and indeed this appears to be the context of Pine and Vivar's usage of the term.

come up repeatedly in this thesis, and which was highlighted in the discussion on the emptying of Honduras. This is the absence and/or invisibility of Hondurans and Honduran NGOs in the projecthonduras network. As discussed in Chapter 8, the projecthonduras community is largely white, and North American. Regardless of any underlying structural causes, their relative absence in the network and in the discourse creates a discursive void in which 'white saviours' are able to fill.

While Marco has made considerable efforts over the years to include Hondurans, their absence in much of the projecthonduras discourse is significant. It links the process of problematising and emptying Honduras to the idea of 'human capital' that is so foundational to the projecthonduras network. Spinning together the discussion (in Chapter 6) of the idea of 'human capital', and the discussion of the projecthonduras community in the previous chapter it is clear that the projecthonduras model is based squarely on the idea of outside volunteers providing development assistance:

> *On behalf of Honduras Weekly, I want to thank every single humanitarian and volunteer for giving so much of their human and financial capital to the cause of empowering the people of Honduras. Without you, the situation in the fourth poorest country in the Western Hemisphere would be vastly more unkind, unjust, and unstable. I encourage all of you to keep traveling to Honduras (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2010a)*

This statement makes the point well. Honduras is problematised by the use of the words unkind, unjust and unstable, with the word 'more' being used as a qualifier (indicating, in a somewhat paternalistic manner, that the writer believes these are normal characteristics of Honduras). Social tourists and international volunteers are here cast as the agents of development, bringing empowerment for Hondurans (the use of the word empowerment will be looked at more closely later in this chapter).

Social tourists and international volunteers are favoured for a couple of reasons. As indicated in the quote above they give 'human and financial capital' to Honduras. But they also have the advantage of not being Honduran, and of not being 'hindered' by Honduran institutions:

> *We are also unhindered by institutions in Honduras. If we want to accomplish something for Honduras, I feel confident we can find a way if we pool our expertise, ideas, and personal contacts. Many of us are independent and creative*

people who do not stop until we resolve problems, particularly when we have nothing to lose by trying. If there is any one thing that we have to have learned from living in the US it is that anyone can accomplish anything if they work hard enough at it. If we can merge this positive spirit with our talents and resources and the selfless affection that we have for Honduras, along with our personal and professional relationships in Honduras, it would be fascinating to see how much we can do.

Interestingly, as highlighted in previous discussions in this thesis, this problematisation of the international development agencies was done in order to create space and a moral imperative not so much for outside volunteers, but for the work of Hondurans and Honduran-Americans in developing Honduras. This is clear in both the original and in the 2010 version of the "unconventional movement" essay which appear to be directed primarily at Hondurans living in the United States, but which have "friends of Honduras" appended to some of the statements:

...it strikes me that there may exist a reasonable number of Hondurans and Honduran-Americans (as well as "friends of Honduras") in the US and in other countries with the capacity to make a difference in Honduras. (1998)

In the context of this discussion it is also pertinent to ask to what degree the problematising discourse is responsible for the lack of Hondurans in the network. Clearly the rational for the founding of the network was based on the emptying of Honduras, and this is problematic for the position of Hondurans in the network. The answer is in the second quote in this section which also addressed to both 'Honduran-Americans' and 'friends of Honduras', and which highlights "things we have learned from living in the US" and states that they are "unhindered by institutions in Honduras". The projecthonduras network clearly sees the agents of development as coming from *outside* Honduras, be that international volunteers or returning Hondurans, who arguably now function with a North American rather than a Honduran habitus.

It is also worth noting at this point that the 2010 version of the essay has 'working in partnership with the people of Honduras" appended to this particular statement:

... the capacity to help make a difference in Honduras (working in partnership with the people of Honduras). (2010)

This slight change in statement points to an interesting question about the development discourse used by projecthonduras and the way in which development terminology is utilised in the network, and whether or not the people of Honduras do now have a place in the projecthonduras discourse. This will be explored later in this chapter. What this discussion has established so far is that in the projecthonduras model the primary development agents are outsiders.

The use of outsiders as development agents is in line with the notion of trusteeship which is clearly associated with a modernisation approach, as discussed in Chapter 2 (see Cowen & Shenton, 1996; Nustad, 2001) and with Thomas' development alongside capitalism in Table 1, Chapter 2 (Thomas, 2000). However it is not the technocrats of modernisation that are the agents here, rather it is Western volunteers and volunteer tourists. In addition to the 'human capital' they bring to Honduras, these volunteer tourists are lauded in the projecthonduras discourse for their humanitarian spirit, and for the relationship bridges they build. This is suggestive of the more positive literature on volunteerism (McGehee & Santos, 2005; Tubb, 2006) and of Rahnema's (1997) search for the 'jen' who will cultivate relationships and be attentive to each other. However while there is evidence of positive cross-cultural relationships from participant observation in the network the discourse paints a more worrying picture. The problematisation and emptying of Honduras that opens space for international volunteers has more resonance in critiques of volunteer tourism that label it neo-colonialism or imperialism (Devereux, 2008; D. H. Smith & Elkin, 1980), and which critique the 'externalisation of development'.

At this point it is important to note that the "white saviour" discourse is an issue that many in the network are aware of:

> *I avoided going on any type of mission before I started on this one because I did not want to be a white person who came in, acted like she knew more than others, dropped off some medicine and left. I still struggle with whether what I do benefits or not. I often think that giving a person a chance to tell his story to one who really listens is the best thing that I do while in country. (Lynn, US American volunteer, email interview, 2009)*

Marco's attempts to include more Hondurans in the network (discussed in Chapter 8) certainly indicate a level of awareness and an intent to be more inclusive. However as

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Schimmelpfennig's blog title indicates, it is questionable whether good intentions are actually enough.

Theory of Change

While the agents of change in the projecthonduras model are clearly outsiders, the theory of change is a little more complex to unpack. It is however, also clearly based on the same logic of emptying and problematisation. Although the problematisation of Honduras appears to be based largely on the unquestioned 'reality' of life in Honduras with little structural analysis, examination of the unconventional movement essay and other texts reveals that rather than being just a superficial acceptance of the way things are in Honduras, the projecthonduras model does indeed attempt to provide an underlying explanation for the situation. This is an explanation that identifies poverty, corruption, crime and poor governance as symptoms of deeper problems:

> *I have been studying Honduras from afar for 12 years.... One of things that I have observed is that the reasons people tend to give for what ails the country are usually symptoms of deeper problems or issues that have simply not been addressed over years and decades. These "symptoms" can of course also be considered problems in-and-of-themselves... take the problem of corruption, for example. But it is important to understand their true nature in order to be able to effectively deal with them. (Marco, Honduras Weekly, June 2010 Networking to change Honduras)*

So what would these problems be symptoms of? In an essay posted on the projecthonduras.com website in 2005 Marco stated that:

> *A lot of these problems are symptoms of other problems; and a lot of these problems would not exist if there were more stable homes and stable communities... In other words, problems such as unemployment, corruption, and crime, which are outgrowths of the core problems of poor or nonexistent education, poor or nonexistent healthcare, and probably most critical... the disintegration of families and communities. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2005b)*

Clearly Marco attributes Honduras' problems to the lack of health care, education and community development in Honduras. Hondurans are poor, criminal and corrupt because they have not had the benefits of a good education, good health care and a good

home and family environment. This is obviously related to the discourse of lack, Honduras has not developed because of what they do not have. The answer then, is to provide them with those things they lack:

> *Give an Honduran kid a top notch education, good health care, some ego-diminishing spiritual guidance, excellent nutrition, and a stable and loving family... make no mistake, I'd be willing to put that child up against any kid in the world. I can provide you with numerous examples, starting with (the boys) of the Micah Project in Tegucigalpa.(Cáceres Di Iorio, 2005c)*

This understanding of the causes of poverty and the problems in Honduras provides projecthonduras with a simple platform for constructive or do-able development. This clearly has links with the projecthonduras philosophy of constructivism (see Chapter 6), and 'doing the do-able'. According to this philosophy there is no need to engage with the 'symptoms' of corruption and crime, or to engage in structural analyses of the roots of poverty. If the problem is a lack of education, health care or community development, the answer is to provide these. This is something projecthonduras organisations can do, and indeed must do given the moral imperative created by the emptying of Honduras.

While the provision of basic needs is central to many humanitarian approaches, and is a calling for many small organisations and volunteers in Honduras, Marco sees it as a part of the larger goal of developing Honduras. He argues that meeting basic needs will pay large dividends in the long term, with a better educated and healthier population who are able to take care of themselves:

> *If you believe that Honduras will really only be changed for the better by empowering its people at the core through vastly improved educational (with a focus on creative thinking and questioning everything) and healthcare (with a focus on clean water and nutrition) systems that are accessible to the masses, then you know that it will take at least a generation before we would start to notice true progress in the country's development – the kind of progress that suggests that Honduras is becoming self-reliant rather than continuing to depend on the good graces of other countries and international financial organizations. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2010b)*

The projecthonduras theory of change is therefore incremental, bottom up and individualistic. It is not directly about addressing structural issues, but is about slow

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change directed at the individual, family and community level. Marco and many in the network believe that although change will not happen rapidly, this approach has the potential to change the whole of Honduras, including eventually its institutions and government:

> *The Honduran government must be rebuilt from the ground up by educating and training a new generation of leaders that are capable and ethical. (Marco, Facebook post, August 09)*

Ben, director of a charity school and long-time participant in projecthonduras, describes it this way:

> *...there's a whole power base in Honduras that does not want change. So you have to surreptitiously get under it, and one of the ways to do that is education… get information to [kids] so they can grow up and do a bit different. (Ben, US American school director, email interview, 2009)*

Clearly projecthonduras sees development as something that is long-term, but individualistic, building up and spreading from the grassroots as Hondurans learn to solve their own problems and start to deal with the issues facing their society. This is not an unusual approach on its own (it is consistent with some alternative and participatory development approaches), but it takes on some very concerning implications when considered in light of projecthonduras' preferred agents of development, outside volunteers. It is to a discussion of these implications that we turn now.

Paternalism and Power

As is clear from the discussion so far, the primary agents of change in the projecthonduras model are outsiders; largely white, middle class, North American volunteers, who offer a solution to the problems in Honduras based on a bottom up, service oriented model of development. While those in projecthonduras see promise in this model, the invisibility of Hondurans in the discourse and the lack of structural critique raises significant concerns. There are clearly some substantial power issues, and the model seems to have deeply paternalistic roots, something identified by Adrienne Pine in her critique. The remainder of this chapter will examine these concerns, looking in particular at the significance of the

use of the English language, the paternalistic imagery used, and the notions of helping, charity and mission underlying the model itself.

English

The dominance of the English language within the projecthonduras network has been noted at various points in this thesis. English is the mother tongue of most of the network including the network founders, and other than the translation of the main pages of the website in 2009 and a defunct Spanish forum, the website and forums are primarily in English. The conference is also run mostly in English, with simultaneous translation.

While the use of English was a pragmatic, default decision and considerable effort has been put into translating the website and providing interpreters at the conference, its use has a significant impact on Spanish-speaking participants. As noted in Chapter 7, the language issue is one of the major structural reasons why Hondurans and Honduran organisations are not getting involved in projecthonduras. However the issue of language is not solely a pragmatic or even a structural one, nor is it only about the language used in the network. Because most within projecthonduras are English speakers, the dominance on English extends into the work done by organisations in the network. Much of their development work and networking is conducted in English, with some requiring interpreters in order to communicate adequately with recipients and local partners. It is also reflected in the large number of bi-lingual schools and ESOL teachers in the network. English language skills are believed to have an important role to play in Honduran development, as this quote about a conference presentation indicates:

> *Ben will talk about education as the only truly viable long-term solution to the problems of Honduras. He will emphasize English-language skills taught by foreign teachers as a powerful tool and the creation of an academic model that can aid in changing the culture of "asi es" (this is) to "asi puedamos hacer" (this is what we can do). (Marco, email to honduras-education forum, May 2009)*

English is presented within the network as a neutral and non-political tool for the development of Honduras, and pragmatically as a skill that will enable Hondurans to function on the world stage. However as with the post-development critiques of the neutrality of development tools, the dominance of English has come under considerable fire. As Phillipson (1992, p.47) identified in his landmark book, the dominance of English

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is asserted and maintained by the continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities, representing a form of linguistic imperialism. As such it reinforces existing inequalities, and it allows the continued assimilation of the values embedded in the English language, potentially further marginalising and emptying Honduran values and abilities.

The promotion of the English language is also political. As Pennycook (1995) argues, language is always taught in a political context. In the particular political context that is Central America in the early 21st century, the promotion of English suggests an alignment with a particular political agenda, and one that is associated with global power struggles. This will be elaborated on in the next chapter, suffice to say at this point that the way in which projecthonduras uses and promotes English is not value-free and has considerable implications. While not intentional, the dominance of English within projecthonduras may be seen as paternalistic and political.

"The Weaning of Honduras"

The use and promotion of English is not the only way in which paternalism is evident in the network. It is also clear in the discourse itself[98]. A clear example of this is in the heading for this section which was taken from the title of a post made by Marco on *Honduras Weekly* in July 2010. The post simply outlined Marco's vision for development in Honduras and how it might happen. What is interesting here however is the use of the term 'weaning' in the title, which clearly compares Honduran development to that of a small child. Regardless of intent, the message of this title is reflective of old-fashioned colonial attitudes, suggesting that Honduras is inferior and less developed than other nations, and presumably a "blank slate on which adult and colonialist, through the use of authority, should write and imprint their moral codes" (Baaz, 2005, p.53).

While such overtly paternalistic quotes are not usual within projecthonduras, the title does reflect an underlying attitude toward Honduras, and more covert examples of a charitable approach are not hard to find. Take for example the following quote (a comment on a Facebook post, in the context of the 2008 coup), where Marco attempts to

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[98] Please note that this section uses examples from English language sources, a decision which further reflects the dominance of English within the network. This is because most of the textual material is in English, and what is in Spanish tends to be simple translations of material written originally in English.

explain why he thinks Honduran presidents should not be able to run for a second term in office:

> *I think that in a country like Costa Rica it is reasonable to allow a president to run for a second term. The country has one of the strongest Constitutions and societies in Latin America & the Caribbean. It has one of the longest histories of stable and democratic government. It has one of the most educated populations and least corrupt governments. In short, Costa Rica is kind of a model for what I would envision for Honduras. I'm afraid that Honduras has a long way to go before it reaches the level of development of a Costa Rica. But I think it is entirely possible.*

While the politicisation of the network and the values underlying this type of post will be discussed in the next chapter, this particular quote is highlighted here as it is a very common sentiment within projecthonduras and a revealing illustration of paternalism in the network. In the quote Marco justifies his support for the coup in his belief that Honduras is not in a position where it is reasonable for Honduran presidents to be allowed to run for a second term. In his judgement Honduras has to progress significantly before it is possible to take on such full democratic responsibilities. It is the use of the term 'allow' here which is very interesting; it places Marco in a position of authority, which is outside – and above – that of Hondurans. This authoritative tone is common within the network.

Another example of the paternalism inherent in the projecthonduras model itself is in many of the posts and texts in which Marco outlines the purpose of the network, such as the following quote from publicity material for the 2009 conference:

> *At the Conference on Honduras 2009 our central purpose will be to bring together a collection of organizations that are quietly at work implementing solutions to Honduras' core needs... education, healthcare and community building. With these core needs met, the people of Honduras can address any issues before them or overcome any problems. (Marco, Facebook note, August 2009)*

In this quote Marco identifies who has the solution to Honduras' problems as the organisations at the conference. The full depth of the charitable approach in this statement is most obvious when the phrase is turned the other way around – the idea that Hondurans are unable to address issues that confront them or "overcome any problems" until those basic needs have been met, needs which will be by the organisations who

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network through projecthonduras. It is statements of this type (and this type of phrasing is not uncommon within the network) that lead to the accusations of social Darwinism by Pine and Vivar (noted in the first chapter of this thesis):

> *As described on an earlier version of its website, the goal of Cáceres's conference is "to inform, inspire and to generate creative thinking about ways to help Honduras through grassroots projects aimed at providing the Honduran people with some basic abilities to live, learn, and grow... so that eventually they are in a better position to solve the problems of their society." The Social Darwinist assumption implicit in this description... is that Hondurans have not been able to solve the positions of their society for cultural and developmental reasons - rather than military and economic imperialism. (Pine & Vivar, 2010)*

While this study has found no evidence of overt racism, nor of the attribution of Honduras' problems to racial causes that would justify the use of such a pejorative term as 'social Darwinism', this quote provides a clear and concise critique of the projecthonduras approach to development. While Pine's critique may seem harsh, and there are clearly huge differences between Pine's understanding of Honduras' problems (military and economic imperialism) and the projecthonduras understanding, her conclusions reflect the inherent paternalism of the projecthonduras model.

This charitable approach is particularly evident in some of the promotional material for the annual conferences. For example, in 2009, Marco's cousin (who lives in Tegucigalpa) designed a banner for the conference that read "Stop the indifference, Honduras needs us" (Figure 18). The banner was designed by a Honduran, and published online in both Spanish and English, and was ostensibly aimed at both Honduran and expatriate volunteers. However in the conclusion of the statement "Honduras' is clearly placed in a passive role, and with the projecthonduras community largely expatriate volunteers, it is clear that they were also the primary audience for 'needs us'.

The paternalism of this statement was reinforced by Marco's comments when he posted the banner online:

> *It not only asks people to stop the indifference, the apathy with regard to the core problems of the people of Honduras and urges everyone to get involved in any effort (small or large) to help empower those in need (... most of Honduras'*

population), it can convey the simple idea that we must stop and really listen with
minimal interruptions and increase our awareness and empathy, because it is this
awareness and empathy that leads to compassion and ultimately civil and creative
engagement. Awareness, empathy and compassion are the beginnings of the path
to ending apathy in Honduras. This is the higher (mas "alto") path that we must
take also to try and end the egocentric bickering and chaos that predominates the
public discourse in Honduras.

Figure 18: "Stop" banner for 2009 Conference on Honduras
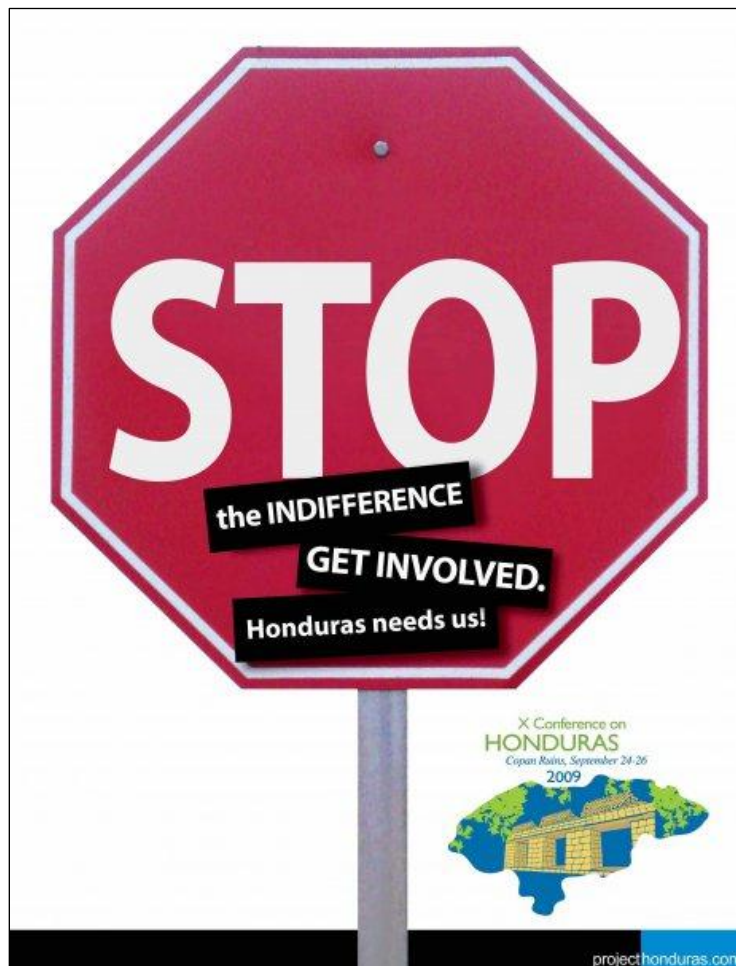
The statement clearly problematises Honduras (the "egocentric bickering and chaos" of public officials) and places Hondurans in the role of the needy. It emphasises the higher path the reader should take, readers who are not needy Hondurans but compassionate, civil and creative people. It also leads us to another, related yet contradictory, facet of the projecthonduras development discourse, that of helping and empowerment.

Helping and Empowerment

> *One overall bit of advice is that we need to remember we are not in Honduras simply to help Hondurans. We are there to help Hondurans help themselves. (Allen, 2008)*

For many years the first line on the index (first) page of the website stated "*projecthonduras.com is an online portal for information on ways to help Honduras*". The expression "*help Honduras*" is one of the most common expressions within the projecthonduras network. It is evident both in the context of Marco's vision for the network, and in the discourse of organisations linked to the projecthonduras network, for example this quote from the 'unconventional movement" essay:

> *While we may not have huge financial resources at our disposal, many of us do have sufficient means to allow us the luxury of volunteering portions of our time to activities that can help Honduras.*

The online Oxford English Dictionary defines help as "*the action of helping; the supplementing of action or resources by what makes them more efficient; aid, assistance, succour to*" ("help," 2011). "Helping" is usually perceived as a positive act, an unconditional, compassionate response. However the idea of help as purely altruistic has been strongly critiqued by some writers, particularly, as discussed in Chapter 2, within post-development. For example, in a very provocative speech to volunteers in 1968, entitled '*To Hell with Good Intentions*' philosopher Ivan Illich highlights the paternalism inherent in overseas volunteer missions, openly pleading with volunteers to stop pretentiously imposing themselves on Mexicans. The use of the very word help was strongly critiqued by Gronemeyer (2010), who argues that the idea of help has become institutionalised and professionalised, that it has become a form of colonialism- a colonialism that 'gives' rather than 'takes', in the expectation of a return. Despite this the term 'help' is one used in a more hopeful sense by Rahnema (1997), in relation to the way in which friends in the centre of power can co-act with the subjugated. It is therefore worth considering carefully the nature of the help offered by projecthonduras and its associated organisations, and the implications of that help for the communities and individuals served.

As outlined in this thesis in the projecthonduras model, help is conceived of as providing opportunities for Hondurans to "live, learn and grow"; and it involves volunteers offering their time and resources to communities and to projects in Honduras aimed at meeting basic needs. The volunteer or development worker is the agent of change, and Hondurans are the recipient of the help they provide. This very charitable model of help is also reflected in the grammatical structure of most texts produced within projecthonduras and many of those from associated organisations which casts volunteers or development workers in an active role, and Hondurans as passive recipients, as the 'stop sign' Figure 18 does. This is also demonstrated in 19 essays written by Marco and posted on the projecthonduras.com website between 1998 and 2010, in which almost all sentences on the topic of development in Honduras are structured with projecthonduras or volunteers as the subject, while Honduras and Hondurans are passive objects (the exceptions were a sentence describing why Hondurans decide to travel illegally to the US and two essays on the topic of the role of the Honduran government). Typical examples include this quote from a discussion of the conference:

> The central purpose of the event is to bring together as many people as possible, representing as many organizations as possible, under one roof over a three-day period to compare notes about the work they are doing to empower the people of Honduras in the areas of education, healthcare, and community building.
> (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2008a)

In this sentence the subject is people, representing organisations that are working to empower (active), while the Hondurans are passive subjects, effectively having empowerment done to them. The paradox of working to empower another will be discussed shortly.

Another example is this, from the unconventional movement essay:

> The idea is simply to bring together "a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens", [to] learn from each other and find specific ways to coordinate our volunteer efforts to empower the people of Honduras.

This quote is interesting because the "thoughtful concerned citizens" (clearly identified in the essay as volunteers networking through projecthonduras") are active both in learning, and in their volunteer efforts. Again, Hondurans are the ones being "empowered".

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Figure 19: Welcome Banner for Conference on Honduras

In a 2009 Facebook post Marco stated this:

On behalf of the people of Honduras, I want to thank all of the volunteer teams that will visit Honduras in February, as well as those teams that recently completed missions. (Jan. 2009)

In this statement Marco not only places Hondurans in the passive role, he takes it on himself to thank the volunteers on behalf of Hondurans, rhetorically removing from Hondurans their ability to speak for themselves. Similarly, a conference banner that has been used most years since 2009 reads "*Welcome volunteers, Honduras appreciates your helping hands*" (Figure 19). Of course, Marco identifies as Honduran, but as the founder of projecthonduras, resident outside Honduras and not a recipient of projecthonduras help, I believe the critique of paternalism and of the objectification of Hondurans is relevant.

The paternalistic way in which projecthonduras sees its role is also evident in statements such as:

We want to make affordable access to clean water for the people of Honduras the country's number one healthcare priority. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2006c)

This quote does not simply assign the job of making affordable access to clean water to projecthonduras, it gives projecthonduras – not the Honduran people or the Honduran government – the responsibility determining the most important needs for Honduras, and making it the country's number one health care priority. In this the Honduran ability to self-govern is effectively called into question, and Hondurans are effectively assigned the passive role of simply waiting for access to be provided.

Baaz (2005 p.120) notes that this active/passive construction has a long history, dating back to the colonial era. However the projecthonduras construction is somewhat different to the discourse of the passive African described by Baaz. The passive Africans are stereotyped as lazy and irresponsible. As the discussion in the first part of this chapter showed, the passive Hondurans are generally portrayed within projecthonduras as uneducated and unable to help themselves (or in some cases corrupt and criminal). Few if any in projecthonduras would call Hondurans lazy by nature, rather the aim is to identify and provide what Hondurans lack, with the assumption that once those basic needs are provided Hondurans will be able to compete on the world stage.

This is what Gronemeyer (2010, p.70) calls help as a 'transformative intervention", where help is allotted to a needy person on the basis of a diagnosis made by outsiders (as opposed to help as an act of restoration, where the person suffering decides when and how much help is required). As Kowalski (2010, p.155) argues, this process of helping a particular section of society or humanity to ''catch-up' is not really development, but is a manifestation of paternalism. However while the help offered by projecthonduras is clearly based in the discourse of lack and the problematisation of Honduras (and therefore fits the concept of help as a transformative intervention), the discourse of empowerment is also very strong in the network. As Marco said in an email interview the aim of projecthonduras was to use ICT to locate, mobilise and coordinate all the 'human capital' available "*for the purpose of empowering the people of a developing country like Honduras*".

While the intent here is obviously to highlight the projecthonduras aims for good in Honduras, the effect is paradoxical. Once again Honduras takes the passive role, while projecthonduras is active, but in this case, as in most of the preceding examples, the action is 'to empower'. Empowerment is a term that was initially coined as a political concept, and is embedded in historical struggles for social justice, and in calls for more equitable, participatory and democratic forms of social change and development (Batliwala, 2010, p.112). The term empowerment was central to alternative development approaches (see Table 1, Chapter 2), however it has been integrated into the rhetoric of many conventional development agencies, and as such has arguably been largely depoliticised and subverted (Batliwala, 2010; Pieterse, 1998). Despite (or perhaps because of) this, it remains an important term in the development lexicon, and clearly in the projecthonduras discourse.

As such it now presents a significant paradox. How does an individual or community gain power through actions done to them by another?

There has been increasing recognition of this paradox of development. As Ellerman (2002, quoted in Kowalski, 2010, p.161) notes the "paradox of supplying self-help... is the fundamental conundrum of development assistance". This was recognised as far back as 1983 when Korten (1983, p.220) questioned the need to exert influence over people in order to build their capacity to control their own lives. Post-development writers, including Gronemeyer argue that this illustrates a fundamental flaw in development practice. Although this "help for self-help" appears to be a "more elegant form of intervention" it is still based on the destruction of "the capacity of a community to shape and maintain its way of life" (Gronemeyer, 2010, p.70). This corresponds with the projecthonduras rhetoric of empowerment, which is indeed also based on the discourse of lack and the need for outsider intervention and therefore arguably on the destruction of the ability of Hondurans to help themselves.

Gronmeyer's argument is founded on the fundamental argument of post-development, that the concept of development is rooted in unequal power relationships. Illich (1968) summed this up with his observation that the phenomenon of international volunteerism could not have developed unless a mood in the United States had supported it and the belief that any true American must share God's blessings with his poorer fellow men (sic). While Rahnema thought it may be possible for friends of the powerless to co-act with them, this is not visible in the discourse, although evidence suggests that it may be happening in practice (see the discussion on outcomes in Chapter 7). As the discussion in the first half of this chapter makes clear, there are some fundamental power issues at stake in the projecthonduras network. The process of problematising and emptying Honduras can only be translated as a dis-empowering exercise, and it is exacerbated by paternalistic language and practices within the network. In this context, questions must be raised about the nature of the help provided by projecthonduras, and whether it can be truly empowering. These discussions of the inherent paternalism of the network, and the issues related to help and empowerment also raise questions about the projecthonduras development approach, and its claims to be an alternative model, and it is to these questions we now turn.

Charity & Mission

From the discussion in this chapter it is clear that the projecthonduras model is one of bottom up, small scale, outsider-led development. The theory of change is long-term, but individualistic, building up and spreading from the grassroots, and based on the provision of basic needs - health, education and community development. In the projecthonduras model the agents of development are outsiders, non-Honduran (or Hondurans resident outside Honduras) who can provide 'human capital' and other resources to help meet those basic needs. The expectation is that with those needs met Hondurans will be able to solve their own larger problems including corruption, crime and poor governance. It is about helping Hondurans to help themselves.

This is a model based on a discourse of lack and on the problematisation of Honduras, a dis-empowering discourse that provides the space for outsiders to provide services and to empower Hondurans, in the sense of "help for self-help". It is a deeply paternalistic approach to development that casts outside volunteers as the active partner and Hondurans as passive recipients – at least until they have enough education and 'human capital' of their own.

This development model is can be described as one of charity, or what Korten (1990) describes as relief and welfare. As noted in Chapter 2, this is a first generation strategy which involves the direct involvement of the NGO in the delivery of goods and services (often food, shelter or health care), usually to meet an immediate shortage or need; the NGO is a "doer" or as in Commins' (1999) words, the delivery agency for a 'global soup kitchen'. While much of the 'development' undertaken by organisations in projecthonduras is at this first generation level, the 'help for self-help' rhetoric also indicates some parallels with second generation, community development, approaches. Indeed, this research indicates that many of the organisations in projecthonduras are second-generation, or moving in that direction. It is also important to recall the diversity of projecthonduras, and to note that within the network there are organisations working at a variety of levels. It is clear, however, that most organisations associated with projecthonduras are low in the generational tree, being charitable or welfare oriented organisations; and the rhetoric and development model promoted by projecthonduras reinforces this type of intervention.

The charitable and community service focus of projecthonduras and many of the groups that are involved with the organisation may have its links with a Protestant worldview. As discussed in Chapter 8, although projecthonduras is not a religious organisation itself, half or more of the organisations using the network are religious, and much of the projecthonduras discourse has a distinctly religious flavour. The word mission is one used extensively in the projecthonduras discourse, and is present in roughly half of the textual data sources collected for this research. Although the word is obviously used in the context of a proselytising mission or in regard to long term mission programmes and missionaries, in Honduras it is more frequently used to refer to groups (teams and brigades) doing short term volunteer work.

The ambiguity with which the word mission is used reflects to some degree the debates over the role of missions in the wider Christian community. Within Christianity the concept of mission and the role of the missionary underwent a critical review in the 1960s and 1970s, moving to an emphasis on faith in action rather than overt proselytising, and to a sense of mission that saw the promotion of the physical and social well-being of people as an expression of faith (Phillips, 2010, p.17). However the degree to which social work is emphasised, and the nature of the work done, varies immensely (Thaut, 2009), with some key distinctions being between charity and justice, and between altruism and solidarity (Hefferan et al., 2009, p.5). While many larger religious NGOs are moving towards a focus on justice and solidarity, the discussion in this chapter indicates that most organisations within projecthonduras tend to be charitable, with the short term 'missions' being one example. While there are a range of organisations represented within projecthonduras, a significant number are what Thaut terms "evangelistic humanitarians", for whom humanitarianism is for the sake of evangelism, and who believe social change will only occur in relation to the advance of the Kingdom of God.

Clearly many of the organisations in projecthonduras, and indeed much of the discourse of projecthonduras itself, are very much charity or missions oriented. A paternalistic and dis-empowering discourse, and a focus on doing and providing services, means their work is located low on the development generational tree. However such a reading is somewhat simplistic. The rhetoric of projecthonduras is not just about providing services but about igniting change from the bottom up; and although seemingly dominated by evangelistic humanitarians it is an open network and many other organisational types are

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represented. Before drawing any superficial conclusions it is important to take these complexities into consideration.

Old Cars on New Roads

While the organisations associated with projecthonduras mostly sit low in Korten's (1990) generational tree, as noted, it is a little more difficult to classify projecthonduras itself. Arguably it actually sits outside any NGO typology, being an informal network rather than a formalised organisation (and one that links organisations of differing types and levels), and not being directly involved in any development work itself. However projecthonduras was explicitly set up as an 'alternative model' and an 'unconventional movement', and as this chapter has outlined, it does have a very particular vision for development. Indeed the original research aim for this thesis was to explore the potential of projecthonduras as an alternative model for development.

As Chapter 2 discussed, an initial reading of the projecthonduras website reflected elements of both post-development discourse (the use of the term movement, and the rejection of conventional development approaches) and alternative development (grass-roots and needs-based approaches). Clearly projecthonduras does not reject development, and as a network of expatriates and outsiders focused on service provision rather than justice, or local, grassroots-led emancipation and social change it clearly cannot be labelled post-development. However it is worth considering whether projecthonduras might be reasonably classified as an alternative development model. As with the proponents of alternative development, projecthonduras is critical of mainstream development agendas and practice, but it continues to embrace development as a concept. As with alternative development, projecthonduras is grounded in a people-centred response to poverty, it is de-centralised and relies heavily on the input of NGOs.

However the synergy is not complete. The projecthonduras model relies almost completely on the input of outside NGOs, as opposed to most alternative development approaches which encourage people to be self-organised and to manage their own resources, and which emphasise reductions in dependence on external resources. The agents of development in most alternative approaches are therefore the people themselves, assisted by NGOs, while the agents of development in the projecthonduras

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model are largely outside volunteers. As the discussion on 'helping' shows, the projecthonduras approach to empowerment, a key trope in alternative development thought, is problematic; and discussions of participation, also a vital part of the alternative development discourse, are almost completely missing.

So if projecthonduras is neither a post-development strategy, nor an alternative approach then what is it? The key may be in the fundamental components of the projecthonduras model itself, and in the formula discussed in Chapter 6: ICT x Human Capital = projecthonduras. What is novel about the projecthonduras model (or was novel in 1998 when the network was founded) is the intersection of ICT and 'human capital', the use of modern communications technology and social networking tools to mobilise people rather than financial capital for development. As such the model does have some resonance with Bebbington et al.'s (2007) big 'A' alternative development (discussed in Chapter 2), in which the term 'alternative development' refers to an alternative means of intervening in a development context, rather than an alternative way of organising society.

The Internet and online forums can therefore be visualised as providing new/alternative roads for development. However the actual vehicle of development is an old one, as discussed in Chapter 2, volunteerism for development, and small missions and NGOs have been around for many decades. What there has been is a proliferation of such organisations and individuals wanting to help, and networks such as projecthonduras can be seen as paving new highways for them to ride, making it easier to work together, hitching rides and speeding the journey towards 'development'.

Is There Room for Alternatives?

Before moving on to a discussion of the destination of these development highways, it is important here to inject a note of caution, and of complexity. As discussed in some depth in Chapter 8, there remains significant diversity in the projecthonduras network. While the network and its discourse appear homogeneous and dominated by paternalistic and charitable approaches, the doors are open to all with an interest in development in Honduras, and a wide range of organisations are represented. Reading though this chapter may give a sense that projecthonduras is a singular model with a particularly problematic discourse, a generalised impression that is likely to be unfair to many

organisations in the network, including a few local Honduran organisations, who operate from very different paradigms. Many organisations within projecthonduras are highly aware of and acknowledge the difficulties inherent in 'helping' Honduras, as this quote (from the same blog post as the quote in the 'helping and empowerment' section) indicates:

> *We're in Honduras not to lead programs, but to support them. That's a big difference in approach. We're pretty good at deciding what problems they have and how we are going to fix them. The problem is that our fixes might not really be what the Hondurans want or need. A better way is to first ask the Hondurans what things they think would make their lives better, what stands in the way, and whether and how we might work with them to improve their situation. The fixes need to be theirs. We can offer support, but they need to own the solutions. That stands the best chance of imparting a new sense of accomplishment and overcoming a history of powerlessness and hopelessness.(Allen, 2008)*

A superficial read of this chapter may also seem to be a somewhat unbalanced portrayal of Marco's reasoning. At the basis of projecthonduras is a philosophy that is intended to be open and inclusive, and Marco frequently reminds the network, on and offline, that he is interested in dialogue, in "conversation not conversion". The clue to this apparent paradox may be in the metaphors; projecthonduras has been visualised here as a road or highway, in Chapter 7 the metaphor was spaces and layers. Projecthonduras can be seen as essentially a space for people and organisations to network, and this is the source of the promise of projecthonduras. There is indeed space for organisations and individuals will alternative and differing models of development.

As a result there are, of course, a range of organisations represented. However the reality is that non-charitable and emancipatory organisations are few and their representatives often feel side-lined. The nature of the dominant discourse (as outlined in this chapter) makes the network an uncomfortable place for those with differing views and understandings of development. The space is essentially filled by those whose development approach 'fits' the projecthonduras rhetoric, by the agents, or vehicles of development whose destination matches the direction of the road.

Chapter 10: An Underlying Politics

The metaphor of old cars on new roads used in the previous chapter leads us to an important question related to the projecthonduras discourse, the question of destination. If projecthonduras is a new road carrying (mostly) old cars, where does the road lead? Or, as Thomas frames it (Table 1, Chapter 2), what is the vision of the desirable 'developed' state? The answer, initially at least, seems promising if rather vague, as highlighted in Chapters 5 and 6. Projecthonduras is motivated by a vision of positive change, of igniting a positive and constructive movement that will change Honduras from the bottom up. What is not clear is the vision for what Honduras will change *into.* Finding the answer to this requires further unpacking of the projecthonduras discourse, an unpacking that leads us deeper into the subjectivities of the individuals in projecthonduras and in particular to the very political roots of their development philosophy. These political roots are evident in the both the vision of a desirable state, and in the interactions between projecthonduras and both US American and Honduran political agents in Honduras. The first part of this chapter will therefore examine these representations, unpacking the underlying politics of projecthonduras, and providing an outline of the way in which the implicit understandings and values of the people that make up the network affect their role in contemporary Honduras. The second part of this chapter will look at the politicisation of projecthonduras during the 2009 coup, as a pivotal point in the history of Honduras and projecthonduras, one which highlights the politics of projecthonduras – an ostensibly apolitical network – and the, perhaps unintentional, political purpose of the projecthonduras model for development.

A Classic Liberal Understanding

Marco gives us our first clue to the desirable developed state that projecthonduras is working toward in the 'unconventional movement' essay (Appendix 5):

> *Without a powerful, influential and motivated middle class, I do not believe*
> *Honduras will ever truly progress...*

The desirable state is, perhaps obviously, one without poverty; however this statement also makes clear that it is one with a significant middle class, and therefore economically

secure. This indicates a capitalist orientation, and more than hints at the politics underlying projecthonduras and its vision for development. This link is clearer in other statements by Marco:

> *Capitalism has many many flaws. It is an imperfect system, primarily because it tends to focus on the self rather than the community as a whole. However, capitalism can be tweaked by enlightened government, business and civil society so that it becomes a more just and compassionate system. Capitalism is flexible. It can change for the better. Communism and socialism, on the other hand, theoretically have more "noble" visions. In practice, though, they both end up being more unjust and uncompassionate than capitalism. Both communism and socialism also fuel the creation of elite, privileged and corrupt classes. Both communism and socialism also fuel the poor and powerless. Plus, these systems, because they concentrate political power, are inherently inflexible to change. But the worst thing of all about communism and socialism is that they kill incentive, creativity, innovation, inspiration... the very heart of the human spirit, what enables us to grow. (Marco, Facebook post, August 2009)*

Here Marco aligns the values of projecthonduras (creativity, innovation and inspiration) with capitalism. He also makes very clear that he personally sees capitalism as a preferable system for human development. This liberal view is reflected throughout the network although it is often subtle, mostly due to the 'apolitical' philosophy of the formal network (something which will be discussed further at the end of this chapter).

The liberal tone of the network is well recognised however, as one volunteer on the fringes of the network told me, Marco "seems to have an almost classic liberal understanding of politics", reflected in the individualistic and anti-authoritarian nature of much of the projecthonduras discourse. This is not unusual in development, and reflects the fact that liberalism is the dominant ideology of the 'developed nations' (Heywood, 2002, p.43). Indeed middle-class individuals whose views are liberal and paternalistic rather than radically egalitarian run many NGOs worldwide (Desai, 2008). This middle class, liberal habitus is shared by most individuals in the network, and has significant implications not only for the vision of the projecthonduras, but for development practice and for the way in which projecthonduras and its associated organisations position themselves within the Honduran development and political context.

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Individualism

One of the main ways in which this liberal, capitalist vision shows itself is in the individualism inherent in the network. Individualism is a defining principle in classical liberal thought, which asserts the moral primacy of the person against the claims of any social collectivity (Gray, 1995, p.xii; Heywood, 2002, pp.44-45). This is reflected in the individualist discourse of the network, and in the projecthonduras development model, as these quotes indicate:

> *The idea is that individual… social tourists, or those who live here, offer one on one help for people here in the country… (David A., US American NGO director, interview, 2009)*

> *The fact is that meeting basic needs of its people may not pay a lot of dividends for a country in the short-term, but over the long-term it will empower individuals to solve their own problems and deal effectively with a wide variety of life issues, as well as those of their society. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2003)*

Individualism is clearly shown within the discourse of the wider network in the way in which research participants discussed the outcomes of networking through projecthonduras, outcomes which were usually framed in terms of the individual (for example, the encouragement and support received by the participant individually); or in terms of the resources mobilised for individuals within their project or programme (such as individual medical assistance or scholarships). It is also evident in the discourse of many of the organisations, which frequently talk of the need to change Honduras one person at a time, from the bottom up, with phrases such as 'it matters to this one'.

The individualism of the projecthonduras model is also evident in networking models. Participation in the network is at the individual level; individuals rather than groups join the forums, register for the conference and participate in online discussion. Wellman (2001) uses the term 'networked individualism' to highlight this change in communities from solidarity groups to individualised networks, arguing that the Internet emphasises personal agency and autonomy, with each person at the centre of his or her personal network – an argument that has considerable relevance in light of the projecthonduras 'flower model' of networking (see Chapter 6). This model places each member at the

centre of their own sub-networks, and makes each individual a facilitator in the flow of information and resources through the community and beyond.

Arguably, this networked individualism is also at the centre of the projecthonduras formula of ICT x Human Capital. In this formula the idea of human capital, the skills, experience and knowledge of individuals, is networked using the projecthonduras website and forums in order to multiply their development efforts. Indeed while projecthonduras clearly has a very particular understanding of the term, in a general sense the concept of human capital itself is rooted in individualism (Fine & Green, 2000, p.88).

This framing of development as an individualistic process is inherent in these development efforts. As previously discussed, projecthonduras for the most part supports organisations that work in the areas of health, education and community development. The development model is clearly one that is based on facilitating change from the individual level up, for example, through education which can change the life trajectory and opportunities of a child; through jobs, access to credit, and training for adults; or through good health care which means individuals are able to live more fulfilled lives. The belief is that societal change will occur when enough individual circumstances are changed, and that economic growth and true democracy comes when enough individuals in the population are educated and working and demanding better government. This is consistent with the role of NGOs in neo-liberal development and development alongside capitalism (discussed in Chapter 2), where NGOs are encouraged to assume responsibility for the provision of social and development services, positioning themselves as "better, more efficient purveyors of services than the state" (Hefferan et al., 2009)

Lack of Trust in Government

The projecthonduras model, which suggests that change occurs at the grassroots rather than through structural transformation also highlights a second manifestation of the liberal world view, a lack of trust in government. Although many liberals see an important role for government in guaranteeing order and stability in society, they are "constantly aware of the danger that governments may become a tyranny against the individual" (Heywood, 2002, p.44). This distrust of government can be seen in the focus

on health, education and community development projects by private voluntary organisations (NGOs) and "citizen volunteers" which is often framed in a pragmatic way, with the argument that the government is either unwilling to help, or is by nature unable to:

> *Somewhere along the line, we have learned to accept that governments and other large institutions change societies, which is strange because in history it hasn't usually happened that way. If we continue to accept that this will be the case, then we guarantee that it will never be the case. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2007)*

The existence of projecthonduras itself relies in part on this rhetorical framing, which is closely related to the process of problematisation and emptying discussed in the previous chapter. However the political undertones are broader than simply critiquing and problematising the Honduran government, when taken together with the emphasis on NGOs and volunteers and the non-structural approach, the picture is one which reflects a deep mistrust of government.

Acceptance of the Liberal Market Economy

Finally, projecthonduras also exhibits an almost uncritical acceptance of the liberal market economy. While there are significant differences across the network regarding economic issues and Marco is particularly scathing of development approaches based purely on economic growth, it is rare to find individuals or groups in projecthonduras who would not agree with his assessment of capitalism earlier in this chapter. Indeed, the whole idea of projecthonduras itself grew out of the idea of a business network to aid development in Honduras. As Critt, a presenter at the 2009 conference, noted in his blog:

> *Teaching the skills of private enterprise to Hondurans, which is a population of under-served consumers and creative entrepreneurs, is a goal of mine. (Jarvis, 2009)*

The unquestioned nature of liberal capitalism within projecthonduras is also clear in the discourse surrounding the phenomenon of social tourism, or volunteer tourism. The rationale for social tourism is often couched in terms of the benefit these volunteer tourists bring to the Honduran economy:

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Of the estimated $567 million in revenue that Honduras' tourism industry generates each year, more than a quarter of it is produced by the social tourism segment. Ironically, this is one of the fastest growing segments of the industry and it is the one that the government and business spends almost no effort marketing to. You cannot ask for a better return on an investment. (Marco, Facebook note, February 2009)

Marco has in the past used these types of figures to advocate for lower airfares for volunteers (contacting airlines) and more relaxed immigration procedures (via letters to the Honduran Secretary of Tourism); and it was efforts like these which were behind his commission of the George Washington research (Chang et al., 2005). These efforts can be seen as a reflection of an underlying belief in the intrinsic benefit of market mechanisms for development.

The business-friendly, liberal approach of much of projecthonduras has some significant links to the evangelical roots of many of the organisations in the network:

I think much of the evangelical community (both here and in the US) have a very conservative, business-friendly approach to the world. Also, the US evangelicals tend to look at things in terms of US interests. (John, US American volunteer, email interview, 2009)

The link between Protestantism and capitalism was made nearly a century ago by Weber (1930), who argued that protestant ethics and ideas influenced the development of capitalism. It is certainly clear that North American Protestantism creates a context friendly to modernisation and liberal development (Hoksbergen & Madrid, 1997; Phillips, 2010), and that the infrastructure created by foreign evangelical agencies is often predominantly business and technology oriented (Hofer, 2003, p.395). However Connolly (2005) argues that the relationship is not causal, preferring the term resonance to describe the way evangelical and capitalist discourses amplify each other. The idea of resonance fits well with the projecthonduras discourse, particularly in the rhetoric of individualism and the distrust of secular authority which finds parallels in both North American evangelicalism and liberal capitalism.

The Globalisers

The label 'globalisers', introduced in Chapters 2 and 3, was coined by Jackson (2007) to describe the role of development professionals in Honduras. It draws attention to the idea that development professionals are agents of globalisation, entering the developing world in order to lay the groundwork on which global capitalism can grow and to create the conditions necessary for transnational corporations to do what they do (2007, p. 6). This reflects a Bourdiean perspective of globalisation as an economic politics, arguing that globalisation is the product of the politics of agents and institutions (2007, p.3). In other words, development workers are seen as the human agents involved in the development of globalisation, working to support the immanent development of capitalism.

As previously noted, Jackson's analysis focuses on the larger and more powerful ODA organisation and INGOs, and tends to overlook the numerous small volunteer and mission groups working in Honduras as they are relatively powerless or, in the case of missions groups and entrepreneurs, have a different agenda. However research for this thesis focuses on these groups which are the core of projecthonduras and, as this chapter indicates, the politics of these organisations clearly reflect the liberal agenda of the globalisers, indicating that they may indeed be contributors to the globalisation agenda. While their stated intent may not be the expansion of globalisation or a liberal political agenda, the net impact of a charitable development model and an underlying liberal politics must be to advance that agenda to some degree.

Jackson placed these organisations in his fourth tier as he believed they are relatively non-political and powerless on the national stage. This research also casts doubt on that claim. Despite an apolitical philosophy projecthonduras has a clear political bias and, as the discussion on the coup later in this chapter highlights, is not averse to political activity. However, before delving into a discussion of the politicisation of projecthonduras during the coup, it is relevant here to discuss another indication of the politics of projecthonduras, one which highlights the very real access to power that the network holds – the involvement of political figures in the network.

The Government, the Embassy & the Military

Although the primary agents of development in the projecthonduras model are international volunteers, both US and Honduran government agents have played an increasingly prominent role in the projecthonduras network. On the surface this participation is puzzling as projecthonduras is premised on a philosophy of apoliticism, it clearly problematises the development models of international agencies, and the mistrust of governments is evident throughout the discourse. However on deeper analysis it becomes clear that the interaction between projecthonduras and the various political agents is neither accidental nor contradictory, and it highlights projecthonduras' very political position within the development industry in Honduras.

As noted in Chapter 5, since the inception of projecthonduras, Marco has taken on the task of contacting both US and Honduran government agencies (including US and Honduran Embassies, USAID, Honduran government departments and the US military's Joint Task Force Bravo in Honduras), informing them of projecthonduras' model and aims, and regularly invites them to the annual conference in Copán. Before 2008 he had limited success, but following the appointment of US Ambassador Hugo Llorens in 2008 and the coup of 2009 (discussed later in this chapter) these political agents became much more interested and involved. To Marco this does not contradict the apolitical nature of the network, he sees the presence of these individuals and agencies as primarily an extension of the notion of 'human capital', and believes the links made with government agencies can extend and strengthen the work of volunteer agencies in Honduras. Their involvement is also seen as a means of providing legitimacy and publicity to the network. As such, the participation of these political agencies is not seen as political at all, rather a neutral tool giving mutual benefits.

> *Now the next step is to really take advantage of our new alliances with the embassy and the military and find ways to kind of help each other because they are going to help us with exposure, maybe money, and we're going to help them with information. (Marco, interview, 2008)*

As this quote indicates, the benefits are not one sided. Projecthonduras receives publicity, and the benefit of the added financial and human capital that the government agencies can bring. The US government also see mutual benefits and, at least publicly, sees the involvement essentially as a public relations exercise:

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I have to tell you that the US embassy, for PR (public relations) purposes, they want to keep the image of the US as high as possible. So his (Marco's) website and what he's doing there in highlighting all the aid groups that come into Honduras works very well in the favour of the US embassy because… that's all good news to the US embassy, so to have it compiled neatly in one place and they can look at it and say look, there are 400 groups that came here just in the last year and they can use that as statistics to bolster the US image in Honduras. (Jackie, US American development worker, interview, 2009)

This idea of a pragmatic and mutually beneficial relationship also underlies the participation of USAID in the conferences. In an interview at the USAID offices in August 2009 in Tegucigalpa Deputy Mission Director Dan Smolka noted that USAID had been strongly encouraged by Ambassador Llorens to attend the conference on Honduras and to make contacts in the network[99]. He stated that USAID was also interested in building contacts in the network as they were actually actively looking for implementing partners and collaborators through which to funnel development funds in Honduras. One of USAID's on-going concerns was the many misconceptions about their work and the fact that many short termers, volunteers, missions and small groups (and he acknowledged there are many of these in Honduras) have little idea about what USAID does. He commented that USAID is not as bureaucratic as people (including Marco) might think

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[99] The interview with Deputy Mission Director Smolka was an interesting research exercise – not just for the interview data but for the experience of accessing US government agencies. Early in the main fieldwork phase of the research I contacted both the US Embassy in Tegucigalpa and USAID requesting interviews. I received a prompt reply from both, and interviews were set up with Dan Smolka, and with Ambassador Llorens himself. The interview with Llorens was postponed due to urgent business, and it was arranged for me to meet with Llorens at the Conference in Copán in September. However Llorens did not attend that conference (due to events related to the coup) and the opportunity was lost.

The interview with Smolka went ahead as planned, and in August 2009 I negotiated the layers of security at the USAID headquarters to meet with him in his office. The interview was relaxed but remained somewhat superficial. Smolka's knowledge of projecthonduras was limited and although he was positive about the network he was clearly engaging with it at the direction of Ambassador Llorens. There was no opportunity in the interview to engage in deeper political questions, however the tone of the interview and the ease in organising the interview clearly indicated that the projecthonduras network was viewed favourably and prioritised by the very highest echelons of the US government agencies in Honduras.

and that a small group often has a good chance of getting funding. Their aim in attending the conference and in engaging with projecthonduras was therefore to address those misconceptions as well has to let people know how they could access USAID funding for their projects.

In the course of the interview Smolka clearly indicated that the projecthonduras network was seen by the US government agencies as both an ally and a source of potential partners. This is significant in the political context of Honduras where, as Chapter 3 indicates, US government agencies have a particularly shadowy history and a highly controversial contemporary role. It is also significant in light of Jackson's study which places USAID at the pinnacle of the development hierarchy in Honduras; wielding the most power and influence in setting the development agenda in Honduras. Regardless of the political intent, collaborating with USAID and the Embassy places projecthonduras in a clear political position within Honduras.

This position is further strengthened by the involvement of the US military in two projecthonduras conferences. According to Major Nilda Toro of Joint Task Force Bravo (JTF-B) the involvement of the US military in the projecthonduras conferences was also practical, JTF-B was interested in letting people know what humanitarian services they offered as well as making them aware of how JTF-B could help them, particularly with shipping and logistics. This offer of help to ship materials and goods from the US to Honduras (for US-based organisations only) was especially well received by many organisations in projecthonduras:

> *As a result of the conference, we have learned how to apply for a couple of grants for shipping containers into the country as well as how to utilize the resources of our own military transports to ship goods into the country. (Tindall, blog post 2008)*

JTF-B not only presented at two conferences, they also sponsored the 2008 conference (see Photograph 2, the JTF-B logo is under the projecthonduras logo on the welcome banner). This sponsorship was also seen pragmatically and non-critically, with no discussion or recognition of the shady history of the US military in Honduras or how the participation of the military might be interpreted by Hondurans who are generally very mistrustful of them.

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Photograph 2: Conference welcome banner with JTF-B logo

This mistrust and the considerable PR benefits of the military's involvement was noted by Leopoldo, one of the few Hondurans who is a regular participant in projecthonduras:

> *I have seen the (JTF-B) base in Comayagua and it was like repulsive for me before I met this lady (Major Nilda Toro). Even though after Mitch there was a lot of help that went through that base and I was involved in the work I thought it was just (for) emergencies. I didn't know they kept on doing it. And then the presentation of this new ambassador. I think he's a different man. I think he not only represents his country, he's got a heart for Honduras. That will make a difference. (Leopoldo, Honduran NGO director, interview, 2008)*

Clearly the participation of JTF-B in the conference was a significant opportunity for the military to be associated with a more positive, humanitarian role[100]

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[100] It is worth noting, however, that this assessment by Leopoldo, of the involvement of the military and ambassador in the conference in 2008, pre-dates the coup and in later personal communication he was far more circumspect.

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However the involvement of JTF-B in 2008 was not without incident and the somewhat bizarre nature of the apolitical facade of projecthonduras was made particularly clear following the presentation by Major Nilda Toro. In the question time a conference delegate commented on the label "unclassified" which was across all her PowerPoint slides, and asked if she could share something more specific about their efforts against drug trafficking. Major Toro indicated that she couldn't because it was classified information, and she joked "If I told you that, I'd have to kill you". Most of the audience laughed, but one conference delegate became very upset. He outlined his reaction, and the reasons for it, in his blog:

> *I got up, first just thinking I'd move to the back. But as I walked I could not hold it in. I turned and said to her something like this. "That is not funny. It is not right to make a joke of killing. I know people who have been killed by governments in this region." She insisted it was just a joke. I repeated my objection again. And then walked to the back....*
>
> *As I think back, perhaps I still harbor pain at the suffering I have seen in Latin America, often perpetrated in the past with the support of the US military and with the silence of diplomats.*
>
> *But as I reflect I think my breaking point has something to do with the apolitical nature of the conference, with little social analysis except that provided by the ambassador and the woman from the airbase (Major Nilda Toro). The very fact that corruption was hardly addressed bothers me. But I think the fact that the person I work for, Bishop Luis Alfonso Santos, has received death threats (along with others) deeply affects me. There is structural violence and structural injustice here which must be addressed. People in Honduras are killed and threatened for less than seeing classified documents. (Donaghy, blog post, 2008)*

This outburst provided a break in the calm, apolitical facade of the conference, and highlighted the incongruence of having political and military figures involved in an 'apolitical' network. However it was only a small break which was quickly glossed over. Major Nilda Toro acknowledged that the joke may not have been tasteful, and the conference continued without further comment on the issue. The apolitical facade was maintained, and continued in subsequent conferences, despite the continued involvement of Ambassador Llorens and USAID, and in 2010, the presence of Honduran President

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Porfirio (Pepe) Lobo at the 2010 conference. The involvement of President Lobo fell outside the fieldwork and data collection phase of this research and I was not present at the conference nor able to collect data directly, however Leopoldo shared some observations with me in personal correspondence, noting that Lobos' visit was unannounced, but friendly:

> *I believe that he (Marco) well knew that Pepe was going to be at the conference, but he acted as if it was like a surprise, as if Pepe was being so kind to come and be there. Somehow I think that Marco was giving Pepe a chance to come before all these NGOs and validate what he and this present authorities call a government of reconciliation. (Leopoldo, Honduran NGO director, personal communication, 2010)*

Leopoldo's observation that the participation of President Porfirio Lobo in the 2010 conference was also a public relations exercise is clearly consistent with the way in which political figures have used projecthonduras. His suspicion that Marco knew Lobo would come to the conference also seems plausible in light of Marco's repeated invitations to Honduran government representations (and the considerable security requirements for Heads of State). Regardless, the event is highly significant in the politicisation of projecthonduras following the coup, which is the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

A Coup D'État

As previously noted, in October 2010, US American anthropologist Adrienne Pine and Honduran sociologist David Vivar published an article in Counterpunch, a left wing online newsletter. In addition to the accusations of 'social Darwinism' in that article (discussed in Chapter 9) Pine and Vivar also argued that during the 2009 coup d'état in Honduras, Marco and the projecthonduras network became tools of the US State Department, effectively used to "whitewash" the coup in an example of the US policy of "smart power"[101]:

> *Cáceres, like the NGOs he promotes, has been a truly effective tool in whitewashing the neo-liberal undermining of democracy in Honduras, and the*

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[101] Smart power is a term used with US foreign policy to describe the combining of the hard power of the military and economics with the soft power of diplomacy and empathy for cultural norms and religious sensitivities (Kamal, 2010; Nossel, 2004)

role of US policy and military in it. Cáceres' advocacy is Clinton's Smart Power,
combining institutions of military force and media and Non-Profit Industrial
Complex coercion to undermine democratic processes in the interest of supporting
the corporations that funded and have benefited from the coup. (Pine & Vivar,
2010)

While this allegation appears to stand in stark contrast to the apolitical philosophy of
projecthonduras and Marco's assertion that projecthonduras is a non-partisan network of
people involved in grassroots humanitarian and development work, as this chapter has
indicated, Pine's conclusions are not entirely without cause. Projecthonduras' model of
development is paternalistic and based on a very liberal politics. The political events of
2009 served to highlight these views and the way in which the development model
espoused by projecthonduras actually serves a political purpose in contemporary
Honduras.

Before examining Pine's arguments further, it is important to understand the political
events of 2009 and the way in which Hondurans responded. The next section of this
chapter will therefore build on the outline of the history of the coup in Chapter 3,
elaborating further on the wider response of Hondurans to the political events. It will
then examine Marco's response and the reactions of the projecthonduras community,
before looking further at Pine's conclusions. The chapter will conclude with a discussion
of some of the potential explanations for the reactions of Marco and the community, and
the implications of these for projecthonduras, and the real nature of 'apoliticism' in
projecthonduras.

Honduran Responses to the Coup

The second half of 2009 was clearly tumultuous for Honduras. The nation was already
divided over the plans for a constitutional referendum, and the coup served to further
polarise Honduran society. It took very little time for people to consolidate into two sides
supporting either Micheletti or Zelaya, as pro-coup or resistance (Ruhl, 2010, p.102), with
marches to support both sides numbering in the thousands.

While it was readily apparent that both groups could call on considerable support, the
social composition of the Zelaya's support base, and the repression of the resistance
(which will be discussed later in this section) make it difficult to know exactly how much

support Zelaya had following the coup. However, a few formal polls were taken in the months after the coup and these illustrated the split in the nation. A CID Gallup poll in October showed that 52% of Hondurans viewed Zelaya favourably while 49% of respondents were opposed to his restoration (Legler, 2010; Ruhl, 2010). A survey by Latinobarómetro around the same time showed that 59% of the population disapproved of the way in which Zelaya was removed, although it also showed that 65% approved of Micheletti's handling of the economic crisis (Latinobarómetro, 2009). As could be expected, results like this, based on questions with subtle differences in emphasis and wording, were reported quite differently by pro and anti-coup media, reinforcing a situation of confusion and misinformation (Naiman, 2009).

The polarisation of Honduran society over the coup was also evident in conversation about the political events, and the political stance of individuals and groups was often evident simply from the language they used. While the resistance and the international community condemned the events as a military coup, coup apologists (termed "*golpistas*"[102] by the Resistance) usually refused to even use the term coup, preferring the term legal or constitutional succession[103].

The non-coup discourse gained increasing prominence in Honduras following the coup as the result of the very powerful support base of Micheletti and the coup leaders. This support included most of the private sector and media, the Roman Catholic hierarchy (although many priests independently spoke out against the coup), most members of the two major political parties, much of the middle and upper classes, and some Protestant evangelical groups (Legler, 2010; Ruhl, 2010; Salomón, 2009). As a result they were able to control much of the public discourse about the events.

The anti-Zelaya, "non-coup" discourse that Micheletti's supporters circulated was based on the idea of the necessary removal of Zelaya as a criminal president, and in a reading of the constitution that appeared to allow for the succession of Micheletti. In this sense Legler (2010, p.23) notes that Micheletti and his allies were very successful framing the struggle:

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[102] From "golpe", the Spanish word for coup.

[103] My use of the term coup in this thesis is deliberate, consistent with international recognition of the events as a coup, and with my own politics and understanding of the events.

> *...in a way which cast doubt in many circles about who were the good guys versus who were the bad guys in Honduras, whether the events of June 28 were really anti-democratic or in defence of Honduras' democratic order, or whether what was really at stake was democratic Latin America versus the threat of creeping Chávez-style authoritarianism and revolution.*

The "threat" of Chávez-style socialism was a common thread in pro-coup discourse, one Pine (2010c) likened to a return to cold war rhetoric[104]. Zelaya was portrayed as a leader who was heading down an authoritarian socialist – or even communist – path. Micheletti supporters "*conjured [up] the spectre of Venezuela's Hugo Chávez and his regional allies descending on Honduras to help Zelaya stage a communist takeover*" (Benjamin, 2009, p.4). This was a particularly strong discourse amongst Republicans in the US and many expatriate Americans in Honduras, some of whom appeared to fear a terrorist threat to the United States.

Micheletti supporters were vocal in their support of the new regime, with letters to the editors of international media publications, frequent posts and comments on blogs and Twitter, and pro-coup demonstrations complimenting the coverage of the predominantly pro-coup media outlets in Honduras. The pro-coup demonstrations were organised by the Unión Cívica Democrática (UCD)[105], a pro-coup network of NGOs and civil organisations. Demonstrators wore white shirts when participating in marches, and were therefore commonly called the "blanquitas" (whites) by the Resistance. These large demonstrations were peaceful, and observed, but not interfered with, by the military.

While the coup leaders had support from some powerful actors, Zelaya's support base was, with a few notable exceptions, largely drawn from the poorer and more marginalised sectors of Honduran society. It included most of the unions (including the powerful teachers union), campesino (peasant) groups such as Via Campesina, feminist, indigenous and LGBT[106] groups, the Democratic Unification (a small leftist political

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[104] Pine was not alone in this observation, on my personal blog in late 2009 I commented that: "*to read some of the pro-coup postings on the web is to step back to the cold war and to feel the fear of communism*".

[105] The UCD is a network of 40 NGO and activist organisations in Honduras (including the National Anticorruption Council, the Archbishop of Tegucigalpa, the Honduran Council of Private Enterprise (COHEP), and the Council of University Deans). It is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (USA), the International Republican Institute and USAID, and its stated mission is to defend democracy and the constitution of Honduras (Dominguez, 2009; Gollinger, 2009). Following the coup it was particularly active against Zelaya and in support of Micheletti's interim government.

[106] LGBT is an acronym widely used internationally for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

party) and a small part of the liberal party (Legler, 2010; Salomón, 2009). Within the first week after the coup, this support quickly coalesced into the Frente Nacional de Resistencia Popular (National Front for Popular Resistance, commonly known by the acronym FNRP, or as the "Resistencia"), a largely peaceful resistance movement, calling for comprehensive structural change and the re-founding of Honduras (Frank, 2010).

While resistance movements are a common feature of politics in most Latin American nations, the emergence of a strong resistance in the Honduran context is noteworthy. Unlike other Central American nations Honduras has not had a strong resistance movement in the past, and its civil sector has been fragmented. For this reason Calix (2010) refers to the protests in opposition to the coup as an unprecedented social mobilization, unprecedented for its length but also for its significant turnout.

The Resistance was, and at the time of writing still is, very vocal, but with limited recourse to traditional media it relied more heavily than coup supporters on street demonstrations and on the Internet and social media. Throughout the second half of 2009 the FNRP launched a series of pro-Zelaya demonstrations, roadblocks, occupations and strikes but these were quickly and heavily repressed by the army, with frequent reports of the use of excessive force, beatings and illegal detentions (Ruhl, 2010, pp.102-103). To date the FNRP claim that security forces have killed more than two dozen Hondurans. The repression was justified by government and pro-coup media as responses to violence from the Resistance itself, and indeed there were reports of stone throwing, arson and property destruction by Resistance marchers. However there is no evidence of any deaths at the hands of the Resistance, who themselves call for a peaceful and democratic struggle (FNRP, 2010). As Cálix (2010) argues, in order to contain the peaceful uprising but active citizenship, armed forces and police launched a campaign of repression and systematic violation of human rights, especially during curfews.

In addition to the repression of protests, pro-Zelaya media outlets were harassed and often shut down. Information from the resistance was spread by word of mouth and via the Internet, which became an important site of debate during the months following the coup. In his blog "The Field", Al Giordano (2009) noted the flurry of pro- and anti-coup messages on Twitter which at times resembled a battle. The comments sections of blogs

and letters to the editor of various publications were also sites of contest over the nature of the coup, and witness to the increasing polarisation of Honduran society.

The polarisation over the political events can be attributed to widely held and differing world views and beliefs, reflected in seemingly incompatible views on democracy, legality, equality and justice, and in which there appears to be little common ground. Legler (2010) argues that these divisions in Honduran society are a reflection of the "mutually reinforcing and antagonistic construction of two diametrically opposed collective identities between pro-Zelaya (or anti-Micheletti) and pro-Micheletti followers, and a widespread perception of a zero-sum political situation", and that the two sides were therefore diametrically opposed not only politically but epistemologically. This polarisation had implications for projecthonduras whose position in regards to the coup will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Projecthonduras and the Coup

While Honduran society was clearly divided over the coup, the reaction on the projecthonduras forums was initially muted. While most online forums were screaming with opposing points of view and debate, the projecthonduras forums, apparently consistent with their apolitical philosophy, were relatively quiet. However (as discussed in the first half of this chapter) the projecthonduras community is not without a politics, and that politics was soon clear within private and non-mediated spaces within the network. In fact the coup events clearly revealed underlying political biases of projecthonduras and the organisations participating in it, and they served to showcase the extent of Marco's influence within and beyond projecthonduras.

Marco's response

Despite his preference for apoliticism within the network, Marco started his political commentary soon after the coup, and his writing on the topic (both within the projecthonduras forums and outside of it) continued throughout the remainder of 2009 and into 2010. It culminated in September 2010 with the publication of his book, *The Good Coup*, a collection of essays and writing he had previously posted on his Facebook profile and in *Honduras Weekly*. His political position was immediately apparent, although he wanted to sound reasonable and to steer a middle course, he was clearly anti-Zelaya and

(as the book title indicates) not shy in putting forward his belief that Zelaya's removal was necessary for the good of the country.

Marco's political postings began with this post on a "different angle" on the coup, which he posted on a projecthonduras yahoo forum three days after the coup:

> *In several of his interviews following his arrest and expulsion from Honduras, President Manuel Zelaya has portrayed himself as an innocent victim of a coup d'état ("golpe de estado"). His view has been amplified by foreign leaders such as President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, Daniel Ortega of Nicaragua, and Rafael Correa of Ecuador...*

> *The decision to arrest and exile Mr. Zelaya was made by Honduras' Supreme Court and backed by a Congress that is nearly unanimous in its opposition to Mr. Zelaya. The military, led by the head of the Joint Chiefs, General Romeo Vásquez Velásquez, moved against the president only after the Supreme Court, the Congress, the Attorney General, and the Commissioner for Human Rights determined that a series of political maneuvers (sic) by Mr. Zelaya were illegal under the country's Constitution and had the potential to cause severe public unrest and lead to Mr. Zelaya trying to remain in office past his current four-year term...*

> *...The reality is that the Honduran military found itself in a no-win situation by a continually escalating conflict involving Honduras' three branches of government. ... If there are any "victims" in this chapter of Honduran history, it is the armed forces, not the politicians. (Marco honduras-healthcare forum, 30 June 2009)*

This early post, possibly written simply to inform the network of some of the background to the political events, introduces a discourse that was to become very strong in Marco's posts over the next few months, that of the non-coup, of the necessary removal of Zelaya and the constitutional succession of Micheletti. It also reflects the anti-Chavez, anti-socialist rhetoric of the pro-coup propaganda (discussed above), and a sympathy towards the coup protagonists including the military.

As a relatively visible Honduran in the US and online, but outside and seemingly independent of government structures, Marco was often called upon to discuss the

political events in the media – even doing an telephone interview in New Zealand with Mike Havoc on Auckland University's 95BFM. One of the first interviews Marco did was with the right wing, evangelical CBN TV network in the US, and he posted a link to this on the forums. In the CBN interview he outlined his belief that the coup was a sideshow in a larger Latin American drama as Chavez and his ALBA allies attempted to create an alternative system in Latin America. This effectively set the tone for Marco's posts over the next few months.

The number and type of posts made by Marco on the 'projecthonduras2' forum[107] in the two months following the coup is illustrated in Table 6. This table highlights not only the large percentage of posts made by Marco (an issue discussed in Chapter 7), but also the way in which projecthonduras quickly became a vehicle for his politics. Note that nearly 60% of posts mentioned the coup, and eight out of 33 of Marco's posts (nearly a quarter) were political comment. Four posts contained information about the Truth and Reconciliation Forum, which were political in a more indirect manner, something that will be discussed later in this section.

Table 6: "Projecthonduras2" forum posts July & August 2009

Total Posts	39	100%
Posts by Marco (including forwards with comments)	33	85%
All posts mentioning coup	25	64%
Posts by Marco mentioning coup	23	59%
Posts by Marco mentioning coup including political opinion	8	20%
Posts regarding the Truth and Reconciliation Forum	4	10%

Most of the posts that included political opinion were in the context of reassurance, that things were calming down and travel to Honduras was safe, but Marco also used the forums to give his political opinion, and to publicise his own writing on the coup. This

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[107] At the time of the coup there were four active projecthonduras Yahoo forums. 'Projecthonduras2' is a general list. Its origins are in the attempted move to Facebook in 2008, when the Yahoo forums were closed. Projecthonduras2 was set up after many complaints about the Facebook forum to provide a place for those who did not wish to use Facebook. Subsequently the honduras-healthcare, honduras-education and honduras-community forums (which had been closed but not deleted) were reopened, but 'projecthonduras2' remained as the general forum and the original projecthonduras general forum was never reopened. Marco frequently posts the same material to each forum. Where quotes used in this chapter originate from material posted to multiple forums they are referenced as a "forum post", posts to single forums are referenced by the name of the forum.

post, a couple of weeks after the coup, is an example of political opinion wrapped in the context of reassurance:

> *But my analysis of the situation and my instincts tell me that the longer Mr. Zelaya is outside of Honduras, the more the situation in Honduras calms down. Presidential elections are scheduled for November 29. There is a chance that they will be moved up a bit. This would be one way to "re-establish the constitutional order" which so many governments around the world (including the US) have called for. We're essentially in a waiting game. (Marco, forum email, 13 July 2009)*

This quote was in the context of an email encouraging people to continue to plan to attend the conference in Copán in October, with Marco arguing that Honduras was calm and likely to stay that way until elections were held. Nevertheless it also illustrates his political position: he clearly believed Zelaya is the trouble-maker and hopes he will remain outside Honduras. He also believes that the scheduled elections would "re-establish the constitutional order" without Zelaya's reinstatement. In a similar context, Marco posted that the street demonstrations in Honduras were "losing steam" as funds dry up – in the process repeating the belief circulating amongst coup supporters that pro-Zelaya demonstrators were being paid by Zelaya and Chavez.

Marco also used the forums to a limited degree to advance the coup agenda. For example, on 13 November 2009 he forwarded an invitation from the pro-coup UCD to participate as electoral observers in the upcoming presidential elections as the usual international observers did not recognise the coup as legitimate and were not planning on attending.

Finally, Marco posted links to his writing on the blog "*Honduras Weekly*" (which he began editing shortly after the coup) and on his Facebook page. While his forum posts were generally brief and relatively infrequent on his Facebook profile and on *Honduras Weekly* he was an active and prolific poster on the political events, posting new notes and opinions almost every day. While these could be considered private spaces and not part of the official projecthonduras network, they in fact became part of the wider online presence of projecthonduras in the months following the coup. Marco promoted *Honduras Weekly* through the projecthonduras forums and encouraged projecthonduras

participants to write for the site, and he was widely known as both the editor of *Honduras Weekly* and the founder of projecthonduras.

At this point Marco's personal Facebook profile was also an unofficial projecthonduras forum. As discussed in Chapter 7, the Facebook button on the projecthonduras.com website linked to Marco's personal Facebook page, and this had very important implications for the network following the coup as the changing structure of the online spaces, and Marco's influence in the community set the tone for the politicisation of projecthonduras. The link from projecthonduras.com to Marco's Facebook profile, and the promotion of *Honduras Weekly* perhaps unintentionally, but effectively made those sites into the unofficial voice of projecthonduras, and inextricably linked the network to Marco's political philosophy.

That political philosophy was very clearly espoused in posts such as *The civil coup the world overlooks*, which elaborated on the thesis that Zelaya had already set in motion his own coup and his exile was simply a response to that threat:

> *Contrary to the popular view that has developed during the past couple of weeks, the "coup" in Honduras did not occur on Sunday, June 28, 2009, but rather on Thursday, June 25... That afternoon, the mob, led by Mr. Zelaya wearing his signature white Stetson arrived at Hernan Acosta Mejia air force base next to Toncontin... Mr. Zelaya's storming of the base with his mob was in fact the start of a "civil coup"... When Honduran soldiers arrested Mr. Zelaya in the early hours of June 28, it was in response to an on-going three-day old civil coup perpetuated by Mr. Zelaya against the existing constitutional order. (Marco, Facebook note, 21 July 2009)*

While Marco still wanted to keep projecthonduras apolitical, he was soon aware that his own position was no longer apolitical. Even as early as July he recognised that he had been unable to keep his personal position separate from his role within projecthonduras, as this quote illustrates:

> *I clearly have my personal views about the "coup" and Mr. Zelaya. I think we all do. I actively express my views, and I think that is everyone's right… I have tried to keep my personal position as separate as possible from projecthonduras.com and the conference. I have not always succeeded, and I regret this. (Marco, email to conference marketing team, 26 July 2009)*

By January 2010 he seemed to have reached the conclusion that it was impossible to stay completely apolitical:

> *It's hard for me to take off my projecthonduras hat and then put on my more political hat.... I think with all my writings against Mr Zelaya, it doesn't help projecthonduras at all... I mean people will kind of associate me with the anti-Zelaya movement, even though I can say that projecthonduras is apolitical - and it is, the fact that I am not apolitical makes it very difficult. So everything is politics really, so it's impossible to say it's completely neutral. (Marco, Skype interview, Jan. 2010)*

This acknowledgement does not appear to have led to any formal change to the philosophy of projecthonduras, but by late 2010 it appeared Marco had become more relaxed both about being political and about using the forums to promote his political opinion, evidenced by his promotion of his book *The Good Coup* on the projecthonduras lists.

Although Marco's personal position was clear throughout the crisis, and he frequently used the apolitical space for political purposes, he was also very clear that his objective was not to cause further division and he kept himself open to other views. Indeed he tried not to hold an extreme position, believing his to be a middle of the road position. As the preface to his book elaborates:

> *I chose 'The Good Coup' knowing full well that it would please no one and probably anger some. On the one hand, those who believe that the overthrow of Manuel Zelaya as president of Honduras on June 28, 2009 was a military coup d'état… will no doubt take issue with my characterization of what occurred as 'good'. On the other hand, those who believe Mr. Zelaya's overthrow was a 'constitutional transition of power' will take exception to my use of the word 'coup'. While the former assumes that all coups are inherently bad because they involve the forceful removal of a sitting president (and in this case, one who was democratically elected), the latter assumes that using the word coup automatically delegitimizes what occurred. I hold a different view. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2010c)*

This quote also signifies a change in Marco's rhetoric from the post "*The Civil Coup the World Overlooks*" which follows the *golpista* line that it was Zelaya that attempted a coup and Micheletti's rise was a constitutional succession, to this acceptance of the military action as a coup.

Regardless of the exact details of Marco's political position, his concerns throughout the events and his oft-stated solution stayed consistent. Marco considered the polarisation of Honduras to be the worst outcome of the coup. In keeping with the philosophy of projecthonduras, his solution to the crisis was dialogue:

> *I have come to the conclusion that it is relatively useless to keep banging our heads together trying to convince each other of the exclusive righteousness of our views. It is enough to truly listen to one another without prejudging and without becoming enraged at each other. It is enough to cultivate the ability to simply agree to disagree, because then we allow ourselves some room to keep talking to each other. (Cáceres Di Iorio, 2010c)*

Marco's Facebook profile appears to be one place in which he was able to facilitate dialogue and in this he seems to have been somewhat successful, with many of his posts drawing comment and discussion from both sides of the debate. However as one research participant noted in early 2010, this dialogue was not always constructive:

> *I also noticed on Facebook that some of his remarks, [and] some of his articles referenced, elicit some very uncivil remarks. I presume this is not his intention but it's disturbing. (John, development volunteer, email interview, 2009)*

While the online discussions were limited to Marco's Facebook "friends", Marco clearly wanted to take the idea further, beyond the online forums and the projecthonduras network. He attempted to do this by proposing a "Truth and Reconciliation Forum". Marco originally submitted the idea to the Micheletti government, but it was not taken up at that level and he then decided to hold it alongside – although officially not part of – the 2009 conference on Honduras:

> *The proposal for a Honduras Truth and Reconciliation Commission that I submitted to the Micheletti government did not really go anywhere, and that's okay. It was a shot in the dark anyway. But the idea remained... As part of the Conference on Honduras 2009 (http://www.projecthonduras.com/conference), we*

will convene the Honduras Truth and Reconciliation Forum. (Marco, forum post, 5August 2009).

Marco planned to run the forum over two days, with 3-5 facilitators tasked with simply being silent and listening without judgement. Conferees and other individuals would be able to take turns at a microphone to:

> *...make a statement, express their views, or tell their personal story related to anything that is of concern to them, including the political situation, the social/economic situation in Honduras, and the specific needs of their families and communities. (Marco, Facebook note, 14 Sept. 2009)*

The forum had to be cancelled prior to the conference as part of the scaling back of conference activities following the return to Zelaya to Tegucigalpa, however planning had been well-advanced and it seems to have been well received by many within projecthonduras. The idea was also well received at US government level. In my interview at the USAID offices in Tegucigalpa, Deputy Mission Director Dan Smolka indicated that from the standpoint of USAID the forum could be a good thing, giving people an opportunity to share what they were feeling, and that that as a non-affiliated, independent entity it was appropriate for projecthonduras to facilitate such a forum. He did, however, wonder how many Hondurans would show up given the predominance of US Americans in projecthonduras.

Despite this high level support there was criticism of the idea. Not all projecthonduras participants believed it was appropriate and there was a perception by some that the selection of facilitators was biased towards the pro-coup position, and a lack of interest from Marco in inviting others:

> *He [Marco] said ok, but he didn't say oh yes bring him (to the forum), he was not excited about it, he said if you want you can invite him, but it's like he's doing a favour for him to come... (Leopoldo, Honduran NGO director, interview, 2009)*

There were also significant questions about the expected outcomes of such a forum. In response to a question regarding what happens after "all the listening" Marco remained true to his philosophy, but vague about concrete outcomes:

> *The goal is to listen deeply. I think that through that process some good things will be begin to happen gradually. The political problems in Honduras will not be*

solved overnight, and neither will the problems of communicating with each
other. But if we can initiate a creative process of listening, then that
in-and-of-itself may grow to be a huge contribution to healing some of the anger
and bitterness that Hondurans are feeling these days. (Marco, Facebook note, 15
Aug. 2009)

While tangible benefits may have been minimal, it seems fair to argue that given the pro-coup bias of Marco's writing, and (as will be discussed in the next section) of much of the projecthonduras network, it is likely that the forum would have been biased towards coup supporters. The idea of dialogue sat uncomfortably with Marco's anti-Zelaya and pro-coup writing that characterised Zelaya supporters and the Resistencia as ill-informed and undisciplined, raising concerns about whether their views would be given adequate or serious space. It did, however, sit well with the *golpista* agenda of normalisation, of putting the conflict of the Zelaya Presidency behind and moving on towards a more 'peaceful' future.

Network responses

Marco's position on the political events was clear very soon after the coup. But what of the rest of the network, the hundreds of individuals representing a myriad of organisations that make up projecthonduras? Chapter 8 highlighted some of the diversity within projecthonduras, and indeed, that diversity is obvious within the range of responses seen within the network. However there were two responses that were most prominent, the first being one of neutrality, the second – and more vocal – was the pro-coup position.

As illustrated in Table 6, most of the postings on the projecthonduras2 forum following the coup were from Marco; of the posts mentioning the coup directly only two were from someone else. Although there were more posts on the other forums the numbers were not too different and Marco clearly did not get much of a response to his postings, and most references to the coup were in regard to concerns around safety and whether volunteers would be able to get to Honduras:

This is in response to groups trying to decide if their group should go to Honduras
or not. We had a group of 14 people who arrived in Honduras on Friday, June 26,
two days before the military took the President to Costa Rica. We were working in
La Mosquitia and had no problems... The people that I have talked with in

Tegucigalpa and Puerto Lempira say they do not believe there would be a problem
with a group going to Honduras, and I feel the same way. (Tom[108], US American
Medical Volunteer, on honduras-healthcare forum, August 2009)

While no participants actively expressed disinterest in the events, many, if not most, tried to keep politically neutral, stating their interest was in their work at the grassroots:

Most people are concerned, but life must move on. I'm sure they all have strong
opinions. We remained neutral in all our discussions with the people we talked
with in Honduras.... There is so much to do in Honduras for the poor. They will be
the forgotten and the neglected. That is our entire focus in Honduras! (Francis,
US American Volunteer, projecthonduras2 forum, August 2009)

I cannot pretend to know what is right; this is not my country, although I love it
like my own. But right now, many are suffering for the wants of a few. (Lynn, US
American Volunteer, interview, 2009)

While the email forum at least remained quiet and relatively neutral, perhaps indicative of the apolitical philosophy of the formal network, as with Marco's writing, casting a wider net caught a far more interesting range of responses. Political views came though strongly in many of the interviews I did and the conversations I had with network participants in the months following the coup and in the discourse in private spaces.

Although ostensibly talking about projecthonduras and about development issues, interview conversations regularly strayed into politics. Marco was clearly not a lone voice. Many research participants I interviewed echoed his belief that the coup was justified, perhaps not really a coup at all. They also un-critically repeated the views of the media, much of it owned by coup interests, portraying Zelaya as evil, and his supporters, and the new resistance movement as ignorant, in the pay of Chavez, and violent.

Many projecthonduras participants also discussed politics in the 'private' arenas of their blogs and on Marco's Facebook page. As previously discussed, the Facebook link on the projecthonduras website points directly to Marco's personal Facebook page, and as a result that page became an unofficial space for projecthonduras and a vital source of information for the English language dominated volunteer community, the centre of considerable dialogue and conversation. Much of this discussion reflected an underlying

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[108] Pseudonym

anti-Chavez, anti-socialist, and anti-communist discourse referred to earlier in this chapter. This discourse was also evident in interview responses and in public blog posts:

> *Zelaya knows he has to divide in order to conquer... so he can come here and change it all under communism just like that. (Christine[109], US American NGO director, interview, 2009)*

> *There have been small spouts of more aggressive protests, some broken windows, graffiti, and one fire started, but this is so much against the peaceful Honduran culture that many say these isolated events have been conducted by Nicaraguans and Venezuelans actually paid to go into Honduras and raise havoc! Powers such as Hugo Chávez and Manuel Zelaya have been very public in their calls for the people to protest and fight. Yet no matter how much the outside pressures are, the Honduran people won't be fooled and they won't be bought. (Brigadesblog, 2009b)*

Because many of the organisations and individuals in projecthonduras are politically naive they were often confused about the events surrounding the coup and unsure of who to believe. Marco's writing filled a gap – it was accessible, in English and from someone they already knew and respected. It is not surprising then that his opinions were frequently reposted and recommended to others:

> *I've told all of our networks to become friends (on Facebook) with him (Marco) to stay updated... Marco's postings have definitely helped us a lot with our volunteers to understand the situation a lot better. (Tim[110], US American NGO founder, interview, 2009)*

> *Dear friends we're leaving to take a short term team to an orphanage of over 400 kids. Thank you so much for the sharing of thoughts and information and insight. I've never Facebook'd before but found I needed to get a feel for the pulse of what was happening and I found it here (thanks to Brian… for pointing me to Marco's Facebook)! All of you who have shared have helped me process the question of whether to go or stay. So, through you the Lord has lead us and we are going!*

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[109] Pseudonym
[110] Pseudonym

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> *Thanks (Mike[111], US American Volunteer, Yahoo forums forward by Marco*
> *August 2009)*

Marco's voice was taken as one of authority, and his opinion was – and is – respected. However not all within the community are politically inexperienced, and Marco's posts were well-received by many who were already well-aware of the political situation and were strongly on the side of the *golpistas:*

> *Saw a TV clip from CBN News of an interview with Marco Cáceres, a man I*
> *know and respect... I attended their annual meeting in Copán in 2006. Cáceres*
> *pointed out, quite correctly, that Honduras is just an unfortunate pawn in a*
> *larger game that Chavez is playing to wrest influence and control in Latin*
> *America away from the US. (Joe, blog post, 2009)*

Despite the almost overwhelming pro-coup stance within the projecthonduras community, as discussed previously in this thesis, one of the potential strengths of projecthonduras is its diversity. It is also important to recall that projecthonduras itself does not have a political position, it is officially non-partisan. It is a space in which those who wish to help Honduras can meet, talk and share, and it is open to all viewpoints. While the term *golpista* may apply to many within the network, to brush all with the same stroke would be a major disservice to others in the network and to its philosophy and structure. Indeed, within the community there are some who were anti-coup, and even marched with the resistance:

> *And so the conference operates in a vacuum. This year the vacuum wasn't really a*
> *vacuum but was filled with Marco's anti-Zelaya stance.... I am not pro-Zelaya,*
> *though I am anti-Micheletti and anti-coup. (John, US American volunteer, email*
> *interview, 2009)*

> *I said I believe that I am more of a socialist in my thinking than a capitalist... And*
> *...I was with the resistencia.... We're peaceful I would say, we're not violent, but I*
> *did write things for some people. I took a lot of pictures that they needed. I did*
> *march and I got some sunburn but I always smelled when violence was going to*
> *happen because it always happened when the police came to repress so I would*

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[111] Pseudonym

leave, trying not to be present. Not that I was afraid but I think there's no need for
me to end here. (Leopoldo, Honduran volunteer, interview, 2009)

However those who were against the coup are clearly a minority, and often felt uncomfortable expressing their views publically although privately they were very critical of the pro-coup position of Marco and much of the projecthonduras community. Leopoldo went on to state that:

But I always told Marco, I always wrote, I always commented on his comments
and I told him I think you're getting the information from the wrong sources
about Honduras... I told Marco "I live here, I breathe here, I suffer here, I'm not
just seeing this from outside I see this from within". But I thought he turned too
much political even when he said he didn't pretend to be that political, the
movement, the projecthonduras thing. (Leopoldo, Honduran volunteer,
interview, 2010)

Despite this, Marco maintained his pro-coup position. The strength of Marco's voice and the dominance of this in projecthonduras, coupled with the changing structure of projecthonduras' online presence had a profound impact on the network. Rather than being known for its apoliticism or its discussion space, or for the on-going work of the organisation in the network in poor communities, projecthonduras became increasingly known for its support of the coup regime and the status quo.

The coup and the conference

Despite this increasing politicisation and the strength of his own convictions, Marco continued to try and adhere to the idea of apoliticism within the network, and at the conference in particular. The 2009 Conference on Honduras therefore provides an interesting case study of the way in which the coup impacted on and was responded to by Marco and the projecthonduras community.

The conference took place in Copán Ruinas as scheduled in September 2009 in the midst of some of the most chaotic events of the crisis. As in previous years, conference planning was well underway by the middle of the year, well before the events of June 28, but despite the coup and the resulting travel warnings, Marco and the conference planning team never considered calling off the conference and went ahead with their plans. In fact they believed that this would be a good opportunity for expatriates to show solidarity

with Honduras, defying travel and state department warnings to come to Honduras and participate in an event that would showcase alternative models of development, as indicated in this excerpt from a note Marco posted on Facebook in July 2009:

> *The 10th annual Conference on Honduras will take place in Copán Ruinas on September 24-26, 2009. If you've been thinking about attending but cannot seem to make up your mind because of the whole "coup" thing, please allow me to put the following bug in your ear, "This is exactly the time to go to Honduras and express your solidarity with the people of Honduras"....*
>
> *I would like for us to make a statement in Copán Ruinas by showing up en masse for this 10th anniversary celebration... Personally, I view what has happened in Honduras as an opportunity. It's a severe wake up call to Honduran society to make everyone really understand that the status quo is unsustainable. Many of you have developed wonderful models for effectively addressing core problems in Honduras. We need to spread these models throughout Honduras and increasingly link up with Honduran individuals and organizations. It is this networking that projecthonduras.com has been pushing online for the past 12 years and through the Conference on Honduras for the past nine years. This is the time to turn it up a notch, not ease up. (Marco, Facebook note, 15 July 2009)*

Although he had already made his political position quite clear, as noted Marco also continued to express a desire to keep the conference apolitical, posting this a couple of months before the conference:

> *... the focus of the conference remains to network people who are involved in projects to empower the people of Honduras. I will do my utmost to avoid letting the conference be used to promote one side or another of this difficult episode in Honduran history, and I plan to make several announcements at the conference to remind people of this. (Marco, forum email, July 2009)*

Marco did acknowledge that politics would be discussed in private spaces but asked for consideration and respect be shown for others. However despite his stated preference for apoliticism, Marco soon felt the need to create a space where coup concerns could be aired, and, as previously noted, planned to run a Truth and Reconciliation forum alongside the conference.

The week before the conference Marco and his family arrived in Cópan Ruinas to begin setting up, as is their usual routine each year. Soon after they arrived, and three days before the conference was due to start on September 24, Zelaya successfully returned to Honduras and took refuge in the Brazilian embassy. This lead to an immediate military crackdown, with protests suppressed, airports closed, long curfews and frequent road checkpoints. In Copán Ruinas the impact was minimal, with only a small military presence in the centre of town and the curfews loosely observed. Marco urged conference participants to continue to plan on coming, re-routing through Guatemala if necessary:

> *I am in Copán Ruinas. All is calm and normal. The country is under a curfew today and the airports are closed, but unofficially here in town everyone is fine... no curfew. The problem, obviously, is that getting here is problematic. I am still going ahead with the Conference on Honduras 2009. Everything is in place and set to begin on Thursday morning. Let's hope the airports open tomorrow and the curfew is lifted...*
> *As always, we will adapt and stay positive! There is too much good work to be done in Honduras to let relatively small disruptions like this to get in the way. (Marco, forum email, Sept 23 2009).*

Despite this the disruptions caused by the coup events had an unmistakable impact on the conference. Marco delayed the beginning of the conference by a day in order to give people time to make alternative travel arrangements, and continued to send reassuring email and Facebook messages. However significant numbers of those who had registered for the conference stayed away. Of the approximately 200 people who registered, fewer than half made it to Cópan (along with a few late registrations). At the time, as a researcher, I posted on my research blog:

> *The day before the conference, when the country was under curfew and the airports were closed I wrote: "I will be very interested to see who is able to make it, and how the conference will work under such conditions". Luckily the curfew was lifted and over 100 conferees did make it, some re-routing through Guatemala City to avoid the airport at San Pedro Sula. This to me is clear evidence of the importance of the conference to many, and their commitment to the idea that is projecthonduras.com.*

That commitment was clearly there amongst those that did find their way to Copán Ruinas, evident in the efforts many went to get to Copán Ruinas, and in conversations at the conference about how important it was to be there. Despite this, my early interpretation is clearly tempered by the number that did not come, and by later conversations with others who had decided it was not worth the extra risk and expense.

Despite the low numbers, the conference proceeded along the usual routine, although with fewer presentations and without add-on events such as a planned workshop with USAID and the Truth and Reconciliation Forum. Guillermo Anderson, noted Honduran musician, and according to some, "*golpista*" (Pine, 2010d), gave a keynote on mobilising the youth of Honduras, and a concert for children outside the conference venue in Copán's central square.

While the coup events obviously impacted on the conference in concrete ways, it was the less tangible effects of politics on the conference are of most interest to this discussion. In the same blog post quoted above I also noted this:

> *The apolitical approach of projecthonduras.com is another theme that has given*
> *me much to think about. This conference was held in the middle of some of the*
> *most divisive and ugly political events in recent Honduran history. After days of*
> *watching the news and talking about the crisis walking into the conference venue*
> *felt a little like walking into a bubble. Apart from some personal conversations and*
> *a few sideways references from speakers (mostly about the travel disruptions),*
> *politics was left at the door. This allowed for the conference to remain focused on*
> *the main themes of the conference – education, healthcare and community*
> *building – and to avoid disruptive conflict. Yet it didn't always feel natural and*
> *political worries seemed to simmer below the surface.*

This post was written in the context of on-going data collection and my desire to remain positive and constructive in my interaction with projecthonduras. However, in this post I also attempted to convey my increasing discomfort at the artificiality of the apolitical façade. The conference felt like a bubble in which politics was an unwelcome outsider. In this Marco's reference to "relatively small disruptions" in the quote from a forum email above is telling. Throughout the conference the political events were most frequently referred to in terms of their impact on travel and work, and their structural significance

was largely ignored or minimised. There was no attempt at analysis or even basic discussion about the origins and potential outcomes of the coup. With the cancellation of the Truth and Reconciliation Forum there was no space for discussion of the events within the conference structure and most participants appeared to respect Marco's wishes to keep political discussion to a minimum. One conference participant noted (in private discussion) just how strange it was to be in Honduras with such important political events taking place and no one talking about them. Indeed, as I hint at in the quote above, despite the lack of discussion the political events cast a long shadow over the conference.

Political connections

The political events did not only cast a long shadow over the conference, they continue to cast a shadow of question over the projecthonduras network. In early September 2010 anthropologist Adrienne Pine (Pine, 2010b) posted an email she had been sent by a friend on her blog Quotha.net. The email questioned Marco's personal and professional links and openly asked whether it was "a stretch to ask if this man works for the Pentagon". As a follow up to this Pine, with Honduran sociologist David Vivar, published the article discussed at the beginning of this chapter, an article which stopped short of labelling Marco a conspirator, but alleged that he was a tool for US policy and the US military. Pine and Vivar argued that Marco's advocacy for the coup was an example of the new US policy of "smart power" (discussed earlier in this chapter) (Pine & Vivar, 2010).

These are substantial allegations, and not without foundation. Pine essentially looked at the evidence readily available, and came up with a portrait of a man whose politics and networks have coincided with the interests of the US government in Honduras and whose advocacy appears to have become invaluable to the US cause.

It is not difficult to see the connections. Firstly, as noted in Chapter 5, Marco has significant professional links with the US military through his work as an aerospace analyst. Pine and Vivar contend that this constitutes an acceptance of the ideological tenets of the defence industry and its methods.

Secondly, as discussed in this chapter, projecthonduras has had increasing connections with the US embassy in Honduras and with USAID, and in the past has taken financial support from Joint Task Force Bravo (JTF-B), one of three Task Forces under United States Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM) based at Soto Cano Air Base in Honduras.

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The final connection is the publication of the book *The Good Coup*. As previously noted, this is a collation of posts from *Honduras Weekly,* which is unashamedly pro-coup and anti-Zelaya, and generally supports a development model that is in harmony with the neo-liberal agenda. Pine and Vivar (2010) also highlight controversy surrounding Marco's role as editor of *Honduras Weekly*, outlining two key issues. The first is Marco's claim that *Honduras Weekly* is a spin-off of "*Honduras This Week*" newspaper, which is disputed by the founders of that newspaper who are concerned that *Honduras Weekly* is damaging their name. The second issue is allegations of over-editorialisation and incorrect or absent attribution. Pine claims that Marco is guilty of deliberately obfuscation in order to help whitewash the coup – an allegation that has some weight in light of Marco's continued 're-framing' of others ideas outlined in Chapter 5.

Given the connections identified by Pine and Vivar (2010) and in this thesis, it is not hard to see why some would make a link to the Pentagon. There is however no firm evidence of a conspiracy, but this chain of cennections is sufficient to tarnish Marco's reputation in the eyes of the Resistance, who view him either as a naïve pawn of the US State department or a willing supporter of the neo-liberal, *golpista* agenda.

As argued throughout this chapter, Marco's politics reflects back onto Marco's creation, the projecthonduras network. As Pine and Vivar state, "Cáceres, like the NGOs he promotes, has been a truly effective tool in whitewashing the neo-liberal undermining of democracy in Honduras" (2010). The arguments linking Marco and projecthonduras to US government interests take on more serious implications in the context of the past use of NGOs and missions by the CIA and the US American military in Honduras (see Chapter 3), a context that could help explain why the question of Marco working for the Pentagon was even considered. Certainly Pine's argument echoes the analysis of this and the previous chapter of this thesis, that projecthonduras provides US government agencies with an ideal platform for the advancement of their agenda. It is clear from the discussion in that chapter that the projecthonduras philosophy and approach fit like a hand in a glove with the US government interests in Honduras and that the reason Marco can call the network "apolitical" is because he and most of those in the network are fully in tune with the powerful neo-liberal agenda. Whether or not they want to be, the position of the small organisations that make up projecthonduras has very effectively been politicised.

Apolitical?

The coup, while seemingly disconnected from the work of a group of small, grassroots aid and development organisations, has provided a crack in the façade of projecthonduras, one that has shed light on the underlying politics of the network. It has highlighted the links between their underlying liberal understanding of development and their public and often vehement support for a neo-liberal coup. It has also clearly bought out the political ideology that drives Marco, and his growing influence – as illustrated by his response to a question I asked him in early 2010 about the radio interview he did with Auckland University radio station BFM. Marco stated that they had contacted him because "*now I think I am considered somewhat of an amateur expert on political stuff... which is ok I mean it's not that complicated*" (Marco, email interview, 2009).

This statement neatly captures Marco's attitude and position, and some of the arguments of this chapter. It is questionable whether Marco fully understands the complexity underlying the political events he has become involved in Indeed he states that it is 'not that complicated') but, despite this, he has embraced his newfound status as an "amateur expert". It is this role as an amateur expert that has caught the attention of the resistance and of anti-coup academics, who have in turn high-lighted the shadows of the *golpistas* that now lie across projecthonduras. Despite his attempts to portray himself as taking a middle position, and to portray projecthonduras as apolitical, Marco, and the network he leads, have been labelled by some as *golpistas*.

So why did a group of humanitarian organisations appear to take such a strong pro-coup position? Why, despite a philosophy of diversity, dialogue and cooperation, did the loudest and strongest voices in the network support a right-wing coup? Pine and Vivar (2010) hint at the answer at the end of their article, arguing that rather than addressing the roots of the problems in Honduras, projecthonduras-linked organisations are reactionary charities that promote a Protestant ethic of individual responsibility that "eschews notions of social justice, democracy and the public good". This ideology of individual responsibility is in line with the discussions in this chapter and the previous one, which showed that most projecthonduras organisations have a middle-class, Western world view with a liberal politics and a neo-colonialist and paternalistic approach to development. As Chapter 8 described, the network itself is now made up of predominantly North American volunteers and development workers. Most of these

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work in small NGOs and missions, many with evangelical roots, and they have had little exposure to, or understanding of, ideas of social justice or the structural causes of poverty. Instead their development work and their interpretation of the political events of 2009 are based on a model of charity that essentially props up the neo-liberal system in Honduras, and they have a political outlook that is resolutely liberal and capitalist. This also explains their fear of socialism and opposition to Zelaya, and their resulting support for a right-wing coup protecting the status quo.

This thesis therefore explodes the notion that projecthonduras is, or ever was, apolitical. This is consistent with James Ferguson's (1990) conclusion in his seminal study on the depoliticisation of development. Ferguson argues that despite being largely ignorant of the historical and political realities of the place in which they are trying to help, the development industry acts as an "anti-politics machine," whisking political realities out of sight while performing, almost unnoticed, its own very political operation of strengthening the state presence in the local region. He notes that development depoliticises intrinsically political issues, preventing the political roots of poverty and inequality from being addressed. These observations certainly seem relevant here. Projecthonduras shows a distinct lack of understanding of structural, historical and cultural context of Honduras, offering an apolitical model of development while (possibly largely unknowingly) their actions reinforce the politics of the powerful in Honduras.

Ferguson argues that this outcome is not the result of a conspiracy, rather "it really does just happen to be the way things work out" (1990, p.256). However, as Pelkmans (2009, p.439) notes, Ferguson fails to realize that specific actors may be well aware that this is how "things work out" and thus the "anti-politics machine" may indeed be used for explicitly political purposes. Writing in the context of evangelical development work, Pelkman's argument is that although avowedly staying away from party politics, NGO leaders, missionaries, and Churches are active lobbyists influencing governmental policies and spreading powerful neo-liberal discourses. This argument rings true in the case of projecthonduras and the coup. Marco's writing and his appearances in the media are certainly aimed at advancing a strongly political purpose, and after the coup at least, he was aware that his position was increasingly political. Many other individuals in the projecthonduras network were involved, to varying degrees, in political advocacy,

including but not limited to pro-coup discourse in their blogs, newsletters and email; and lobbying politicians in their home countries.

This discussion therefore supports Jackson's conclusion that development workers act as globalisers, but extends it to small volunteer and religious agencies. In addition, contrary to Jackson's assertion that these small groups lack a political agenda and are relatively powerless in Honduras, this study finds that these groups clearly have a development agenda that is highly politicised in the Honduran context, which is reinforced through the process of online networking. Through the network they also have increasing access to both Honduran government power (including the attention of the President), and to Jackson's (2007) top tier of powerful development organisations (through USAID). While they may lack the power to directly influence policy or to initiate change, this access to power stands in stark contrast to the lack of power held by the Hondurans they exist to help. As Jackson argues (p.15), in development "local agendas succeed only as they are capable of linking to the global agendas', and those global agendas are set by the top tier. Linking directly to these powerful organisations, gives projecthonduras-linked organisations access to power well beyond that of their position on the fourth tier.

This increasing power and politicisation has profound implications for the projecthonduras network. Because of Marco's "amateur expert" status, outside of the network he continues to be the face and voice of projecthonduras. He may speak of apoliticism within projecthonduras, but his political writing and advocacy cannot be separated from his identity as the founder of projecthonduras. This means that in 2010 projecthonduras is known not for its apoliticism or its discussion space but for its powerful allies, and for its support of the coup regime and the status quo. Despite their on-going work in poor communities, their support for the neo-liberal regime is in stark contrast to the rise of the Honduran resistance movement. Far from being apolitical and powerless, the way in which development is constructed within projecthonduras reflects and furthers a politics of development which is liberal and paternalistic, and neatly aligned with the *golpistas*, and the authors of the neo-liberal agenda in Honduras.

Chapter 11: Conclusion

This research began with a simple question. Is projecthonduras an alternative model for development? Finding an answer to that, and to the other questions which arose in this research, led me on a long and winding road, through development theory, discussions of new technologies and not-so-new agents of development, the history and politics of Honduras, and into the structure and discourse of the network itself. The findings have been fascinating, and often deeply paradoxical. Throughout this thesis the promise of projecthonduras has contrasted with some very strong critique in an interplay of light and shadow that has revealed and highlighted the contours of the structure of the network, the values, beliefs and motivations of the participants in the network, and ultimately the nature of the development work that they do. Political events threw these into even stronger relief, shaping my fieldwork and my writing, making my personal experience more political, and politicising my understanding of the network.

The emergence of political themes in the research was somewhat unexpected given the apolitical philosophy of the network, and yet probably should have been predictable in the particular context of Honduran development. As discussed in Chapter 2 the concept of development has a highly political history, and the choice of development approach has considerable political implications and impacts. These are particularly evident in the political nexus that is Honduran development, as highlighted in examination of the controversial role of the development industry in Honduran history and politics in Chapter 3. From this basis the emergence of a political theme in this research seems almost inevitable. This final chapter relates this theme back to the research question, taking a step back in order to finally get a wide angled view on the projecthonduras model for development, including both its visible structure, its promise and its underlying political roots; and to reflect on a research journey that took me from the heights of optimism to deep methodological and theoretical shadows.

The Projecthonduras Development Model

In Chapter 2 I discussed the major approaches to development, using a table devised by Thomas (Table 1), who outlined each approach in terms of the vision for a desirable

'developed 'state, theories of social change, the role of 'development' and the agents of development. At this point it is worth returning to that table and identifying where projecthonduras sits. To do this Thomas' table is reproduced in Table 7, with red lettering indicating where the projecthonduras' model is aligned.

Table 7: Projecthonduras located in Jackson's summary of the main views of development

	Development *of* capitalism	Development *alongside* capitalism		Development against capitalism		Rejection of development
	Neo-liberalism	Interventionism		Structuralism	`Alternative' (People-centered) development	`Post-development'
		`Market efficiency'	`Governing the market'			
Vision: desirable `developed' state	Liberal capitalism (modern industrial society and liberal democracy)			Modern industrial society (but not capitalist)	All people and groups realize their potential	[`development' is not desirable]
		(plus achieving basic social/ environmental goals)				
Theory of social change	Internal dynamic of capitalism	Need to remove `barriers' to modernization	Change can be deliberately directed	Struggle between classes (and other interests)	[not clear]	[not clear]
Role of `development'	Immanent process within capitalism	To `ameliorate the disordered faults of [capitalist] progress'		Comprehensive planning/ transformation of society	Process of individual and group empowerment	A `hoax' which strengthened US hegemony
Agents of development	Individual entrepreneurs	Development agencies or `trustees' of development (states, NGOs, international organizations)		Collective action (generally through the state)	Individuals, social movements	Development agencies

Source: Thomas (2000), adapted by author

Red text indicates where facets of the projecthonduras development model intersect with the various views of development, with darker red text showing those areas of strong agreement and lighter text showing those areas where there is some affinity but not full agreement.

This table shows that, despite projecthonduras' apparent rejection of traditional development models based on financial capital, the projecthonduras vision is clearly aligned with 'development alongside capitalism', that is liberal capitalism (a modern industrial society and liberal democracy) but of the interventionist type which includes the achievement of basic social goals. The projecthonduras model sees change as something that can be deliberately directed, also situating the model within an interventionist mode of development. Thomas (2000, p.782) argues that interventionism forms the current mainstream of development, which means that to a significant degree

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projecthonduras reflects a conventional development approach rather than a new model. However, while the projecthonduras model clearly has an interventionist vision, the bottom-up and incremental nature of change in the projecthonduras model is somewhat different to the state directed models of capitalist development described by Thomas.

Projecthonduras also diverges from the 'development alongside capitalism' models in its understanding of the role of development, seeing development as a process of individual and group empowerment. This is consistent with an alternative development ('people-centred') approach (A. J. Bebbington & Bebbington, 2001; Drabek, 1987; Korten, 1990). In fact in many aspects projecthonduras does reflect an alternative development vision, aiming to enable all people and groups in Honduras to realise their potential. However the underlying politics of the network is liberal and as such projecthonduras clearly does not promote a development alternative *against* capitalism, which is where Thomas situates alternative development approaches. In this sense projecthonduras is perhaps an illustration of the incorporation of the rhetoric of alternative development into conventional approaches (Batliwala, 2010; Cornwall & Brock, 2005). Certainly projecthonduras makes generous use of terms such as empowerment, although often in a problematic and disempowering way (as discussed in Chapter 9).

The question of the agents of development is also an area where projecthonduras appears to straddle the two approaches. On the surface it may seem that projecthonduras has some affinity with the agents in alternative development, which are individuals and social movements. Projecthonduras also describes itself as a movement. However the individuals and social movements of projecthonduras are not the local, grassroots or indigenous agents of alternative development approaches or Korten's (1990) 'people movement', but outside volunteers. The problematisation and 'emptying' (Tsing, 2005) of Honduran solutions in the projecthonduras discourse effectively makes outsiders the main source of development assistance in the projecthonduras model. This is in line with interventionist models of liberal capitalist development, where the agents of development are development agencies or 'trustees' of development including NGOs, international organisations and states (Chambers, 1997; Ferguson, 1990; Jackson, 2007), although of course the projecthonduras model sees little role for large, institutional development agencies and for the state. The agents are individual volunteers working in small scale projects and NGOs. Interestingly projecthonduras also sees a significant role for

individual entrepreneurs, particularly social entrepreneurs. This, according to Thomas (in Table 7), is at the neo-liberal end of the liberal capitalist spectrum, which lends some weight to the conclusion that the projecthonduras model reinforces a liberal capitalist approach to development.

While it would be difficult to argue, given its strongly interventionist stance to development, that projecthonduras is neo-liberal in its approach, it is worth noting that regardless of intent, the involvement of the NGOs (including the small organisations in projecthonduras) in the provision of services in Honduras is consistent with neo-liberal practice globally (Hefferan et al., 2009). As Chapter 2 notes, in the wake of structural adjustment and privatisation policies across the developing world, NGOs have been entrusted with the delivery of public services on a hitherto unknown scale (Hefferan et al., 2009). In this light the provision of services by organisations in projecthonduras can be seen as supporting neo-liberal change in Honduras. This is possibly largely unintentional, and many groups within the network are unaware of the role they play in the neo-liberal system, and yet as this discussion has highlighted, it is entirely consistent with the underlying liberal politics of projecthonduras. It is also consistent with the increasing interest in projecthonduras shown by government representatives, particularly the involvement of USAID and Honduran government representatives in the projecthonduras conferences.

An Alternative Model?

What this all means is that projecthonduras most strongly resonates with a liberal capitalist interventionist approach to development, and clearly does not fit the definition of an alternative development approach, as least in terms of general development theory. The acceptance of the liberal capitalism, the interventionist, outsider-led approach to development and the affinity of the model with neo-liberal agendas make it certain that this is not alternative development, at least not as Thomas describes it. This is likely to be reflective of the fact that projecthonduras emerged from a practical desire to do something to help Honduras, rather than from academic analysis and knowledge of development theory and vocabulary. It is, however, illustrative of the way in which the rhetoric of alternative development has been assimilated into the discourse of conventional development organisations (Batliwala, 2010; Cornwall & Brock, 2005;

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Pieterse, 1998), without necessarily signifying an acceptance of the underlying principles or values of alternative development.

In Chapter 9 I introduced the analogy of old cars on new roads. At this point it seems relevant to extend the analogy a step further. The projecthonduras model can be understood as a new road (ICT), carrying mostly the same old cars (international volunteers and NGOs), moving towards an old destination. That destination is the same one development agencies and Western governments have been directing poor nations and communities to for much of the past century, the liberal, capitalist model of modernising development. Far from being an alternative *to* development, projecthonduras functions as alternative means for *doing* development. In this, is has some resonance with Bebbington et al.'s (2008) big 'A' alternative development, where the term refers to alternative ways of intervening (rather than little 'a' alternative development, referring to alternative ways of organising society), discussed in Chapter 2.

However it could be argued that it barely functions as an alternative means for development intervention. As noted above, the rhetoric of alternative development may be used within the network but the development interventions are generally of a charitable or welfare nature (sitting low in Korten's (1990) generational tree of NGO strategies), development models that are as old as the development machine itself. What projecthonduras does do is to provide a space, a means of communicating and networking that functions as a new, faster road for those that wish to use it. Some do, many do not. Certainly the destination of that road has a limiting effect on the use of it. Those with a different vision for Honduras, a more structurally nuanced understanding of development, or a different set of cultural or political values, see little purpose in joining a network whose development direction is fundamentally different to their own.

The projecthonduras model is therefore at best an alternative means for development intervention, and not an alternative way of organising society. It is clearly not a post-development approach, as it does not claim to be alternative *to* development. Post-development rejects development as undesirable, and sees it negatively as a hoax which strengthens US hegemony (Escobar, 1995; Sachs, 1999; A. Thomas, 2000). Given the US dominance of the projecthonduras community and the involvement of high level US government agents in the network, it is highly likely that a post-development theorist

would see the network as reinforcing US hegemony and neo-liberal agendas in Honduras. Indeed this was the position of Pine and Vivar (2010) in their scathing critique of the network in *Counterpunch*.

Projecthonduras in the Honduran context

The presence of government agencies in the wider projecthonduras network is a reminder that projecthonduras is not a general development forum; it is a network for people working in a very particular development context. This context is Honduras, and as discussed in Chapters 3 and 10, it is a highly contested development space. The long history of US political and corporate interventionism in Honduras, and the use of development aid for political purposes (particularly in the time of the Contras) has made the role of outside organisations decidedly political (Boyer, 2010; M. O. Ensor & B. E. Ensor, 2009; Stoll, 1991), a conclusion supported by Jackson's (2007) assertion that development workers in Honduras are globalisers. While many, if not all, organisations in projecthonduras would deny direct political involvement their presence can, and does, reflect the concept of globalisers, and even draws accusations of neo-colonialism and US imperialism.

These accusations are reinforced by the liberalism of many of the organisations and individuals. As discussed, in general, organisations networking within projecthonduras support a liberal, capitalist vision for development, and have a highly North-American worldview. Rather than aligning with those they are trying to help, this world view aligns the organisations and people working in them with powerful elites in Honduras. This alignment is very clear in the on-going participation of Honduran and US government agents in the network, which gives the network access to power beyond the normal sphere of small NGOs, and well beyond that of the recipients of their help.

While for the most part projecthonduras and the organisations linked to it remain in Jackson's (2007) fourth tier of power, and the network arguably has little functional power with which to influence the direction and policy of either the Honduran or the US American governments, this access to the power of the top tier of development organisations in Honduras places projecthonduras in a very clear political position within Honduras. This was particularly apparent in the events of 2009 when much of the projecthonduras network supported a neo-liberal led coup. In the polarised environment

of contemporary Honduras, this positioning speaks more loudly than a rhetoric of apoliticism.

This positioning also sets projecthonduras apart from many Honduran civil society groups. As Chapter 8 highlights, in general Hondurans and Honduran NGOs are not getting involved in projecthonduras. Although the network was founded to network Hondurans outside Honduras, it has become a network of North Americans wanting to 'help'. Despite considerable efforts to include more Hondurans (including translation of the website, forming a Honduran-based, Spanish speaking marketing team and encouraging network participants to invite Honduran partners, staff and Honduran volunteers) the number of Hondurans in the network has remained consistently low. Chapters 7 and 8 discussed some structural reasons for the low numbers of Hondurans; but the reasons efforts to recruit Hondurans have been largely unrewarded may be because they have been focused on symptoms rather than the causes. Unpacking the discourse and politics of projecthonduras shows projecthonduras has at its roots a Westernised, liberal philosophy and a paternalistic development model that serves to exclude Hondurans.

I do not believe projecthonduras set out to exclude Hondurans, or to deliberately or knowingly problematise and "empty"[112] Honduras. Neither do I believe that for the most part Hondurans are staying away because of what they hear. However there must be some level of correlation between the difficulty in recruiting Hondurans to the network, and the underlying and problematic discourse. With the disempowering discourse, the dominance of English and a very Western development orientation and politics there is very little space in the network for Hondurans to claim authority or power in the development of their communities and nation.

Promise & Politics in the Projecthonduras Network

As the preceding discussion indicates, the concept of politics ties together many of the concepts and images in this thesis. While it is clearest in the discussion of the development model and politics of projecthonduras, and obviously in the coup events, it also underlies the descriptive elements of this thesis, including the philosophy, the use of

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[112] From Tsing, 2005. See Chapter 9.

ICT and the focus on people and their 'human capital'. However, as the subtitle of this thesis *Promise and politics in the projecthonduras network* indicates, the concept of politics stands alongside that of promise. Indeed one of the main contributions of this research is at the intersection of these seemingly conflicting concepts.

In this thesis the term promise denotes what could be, the potential held by the idea of ICT and social networking, of people and relationships and of networking. Promise is the positive space in which good things could happen at a future time. Conversely, the concept of politics is caught in the here and now, in the messy realities of development intervention, and of geo-political, economic and cultural power and privilege. As will be discussed in the remainder of this section, this intersection is seen in the analysis of the philosophy, of the role of ICT and of 'human capital' in the network, and in the methodology of the research itself. At the conclusion of this thesis it is worth reflecting on each of these, and on what has been learned at these important intersections.

The Philosophy

The interplay of politics and promise is perhaps seen most clearly in the philosophy of the network, outlined in Chapter 6. There is some resonance here with post-development in terms of recent hopeful literature that is more constructive and hopeful in orientation (McKinnon, 2007, p.774), and that believes in the value of progressive efforts toward positive change, looking to the hope of a transformed world (Gibson-Graham, 2006; McKinnon et al., 2008; Simon, 2006). This sense of hopefulness is captured in the positive and constructive philosophy of projecthonduras, in its vision of becoming an unconventional movement, and in all Marco's writing of 'conversation' and 'listening', of 'partnerships' and of building a 'better Honduras'.

For practical and philosophical reasons the network intentionally shuns political talk and takes no overt political stance, preferring to be (publically at least) 'apolitical'. Yet as the discussion above indicates, people are by nature political and so is development, therefore politics cannot be kept outside forever. Political viewpoints were known and discussed, particularly at the time of the coup. Moreover, revelations of political viewpoints served to highlight the capitalist orientation of the projecthonduras development philosophy, as support for the coup aligned with individualistic and

economically liberal development approaches. In this particular politicised environment, development and development agents are clearly not apolitical.

The political underpinnings of the network can also be seen in the positive, do-able philosophy of the network which has clear roots in a liberal, individualistic worldview. The belief within projecthonduras is that Honduras can be rescued (that is, economic development will occur) if the children and youth can get a decent education and opportunities to participate in the workforce. Structural and institutional injustices are acknowledged as problems but they are not addressed by projecthonduras. The belief within projecthonduras is that the average missionary or aid worker in Honduras can do little to change corrupt institutions in the short term, but it does not matter because they can begin the process of facilitating change from the bottom up, one-to-one.

Linked to the philosophy of do-abilty or constructivism is positivity. Within projecthonduras participants are discouraged from talking about what is not do-able, or about the things that may divide them – like whether or not a coup is a coup – because it is not constructive and has the potential to damage relationships. This is clearly a political position that only the advantaged can take, and effectively denies the reality of structural injustice for the recipients of development aid. It also effectively excludes organisations and individuals who would like to speak up and discuss political and structural concerns, reinforcing one particular point of view to the exclusion of others.

Despite this, the word potential appears repeatedly in this thesis. The ultimate goal of projecthonduras is to harness 'human capital' into an unconventional movement for change in Honduras (and beyond). Marco believes this is a model for doing development that is more effective than traditional financial aid, and many agree with him. But evidence from this study suggests that very few, if any, believe the network has reached is potential yet. There are clearly structural reasons for this (addressed in Chapter 7), but it can also be explained in political terms. The particular politics of the average projecthonduras participant lead them to believe that change will occur from the individual level, so effort is focused on assisting people at the individual level. This also makes a community of do-ers, individuals hard at work 'doing' development. As discussed in Chapter 2, the term movement implies political action to a cause (Diani, 2000; Mayo, 2005; Tarrow, 1998), yet in projecthonduras there is no cause to rally around, just

the day to day work of helping people. A movement is a political term which stands at odds with the apolitical nature of the network.

ICT and 'Human Capital'

The source of much of the promise in projecthonduras is reflected in the formula, ICT x Human Capital, which highlights what is perhaps the real meaning of 'alternative' in the projecthonduras alternative model, the novel idea of linking people using modern communications technology in order to multiply their good efforts in Honduras. Like Rahnema (1997) who was looking for the 'good people, everywhere' cultivating 'new relationships of friendship', projecthonduras is deeply imbued with the importance of human relationships and compassion. Human Capital, as defined by projecthonduras, is not only the second half of the formula (ICT x HC) it is arguably the very foundation of the projecthonduras model. The ICT network and annual conference in Copán exist in order to provide space for relationships to form between individuals and organisations in the network. These relationships provide the basis for the sharing and multiplication of 'human capital', and were among some of the most commonly identified outcomes of networking through projecthonduras. These relationships are perhaps the most promising aspect of the projecthonduras model, and they reflect the positivity of much of the literature on volunteer tourism (Devereux, 2008; Lewis, 2005; McIntosh & Zahra, 2007; Tubb, 2006; Wearing, 2001).

In this sense the communication technology not only provides the infrastructure of the group, it also provides the space, metaphorically and physically, for relationships to begin. This also echoes an optimistic literature, that of ICT4D 2.0 and development 2.0 (Addison, 2009; Heeks, 2009; Unwin, 2009). Indeed, while the optimism with which many have embraced ICT networks may be overstated – the discussion in Chapter 7 makes the limitations of online networking very clear – the potential for facilitating communication and the multiplication of effort is significant. Within projecthonduras, the online network not only allows organisations to make contact with each other, it has arguably facilitated the opportunity for links outside the normal social realms of small NGOs, promoted sharing and partnership, and has provided space for teaching and learning.

The potential of projecthonduras is therefore in the notionally 'apolitical' space it provides and the relationships it facilitates. But spaces do not stay neutral. They are

imbued with the politics of those that inhabit them. As Chapter 7 outlines, efforts to maintain an apolitical space are bypassed through the various layers of the network. In fact, it is clear that the way in which the space within projecthonduras is structured, including the use of English, the issues with ICT access, and the apoliticism and the associated refusal to address issues of importance to some participants (such as corruption), also reinforces the particular power structure of development in Honduras. Warkentin and Mingst (2000) call attention to this phenomenon, arguing that although the collapsing of time is made possible by new information and communications technologies, political space, or at least the unequal division of it, remains relatively unchanged. In other words, it is the same people whose voices are heard, and "voices of power still issue from more or less the same locales of privilege" (Beier, 2003, p.804).

This criticism is particularly valid in the case of projecthonduras. As this research has shown, the parameters of the projecthonduras community, which are set by the philosophy of the network, are derived from its underlying (paternalistic) development model and (liberal) politics. Those that are attracted to the network are therefore those who are comfortable within those boundaries. This means that the 'human capital' – the "time, energy, talents, experience, expertise, imagination, and contacts" – shared by projecthonduras is contributed by a community that is largely (but not exclusively) white, Western and politically liberal. These are people who are also mostly do-ers, with a strong preference for action in the form of service provision, helping or doing things *for* others, what Schimmelpfennig (2010) terms *Whites in Shining Armour*. Their paternalistic model for development is reflective of much of the critical literature regarding volunteer tourism, particularly short term volunteer tourism, which shows that it can cultivate dependency and promote Western consumerism (Cooke, 2004; McGehee & Andereck, 2008; Simpson, 2004), and it can be a form of neo-colonialism or imperialism which boosts Western government and neo-liberal interests (Devereux, 2008; D. H. Smith & Elkin, 1980).

This is the generative intersection of ICT and 'human capital', a place where the promise of an apolitical space meets the political realities of development work. The tensions between critique and possibility are clearly reflected at this intersection, in the mirrored concerns of the ICT and volunteerism literature, and in the findings of this thesis which

both reflects the potential for the development of alternatives, and actuality of a paternalistic network with a politically liberal development model.

Reflections on the Research Process

The final way in which promise and politics intersect in this thesis is in the research process itself. As discussed at the very beginning of this thesis, this research began with a sense of light, and of possibility, however over the three years of preparation, data collection, analysis and writing it became clear that there were some significant shadows. This was reflected in the research process, as the early appreciative approach met with the sometimes messy reality of doing research in a dispersed network and in the midst of political turmoil.

As Chapter 1 notes, I began the PhD journey looking for a topic that was hopeful, and which offered solutions. The rhetoric and positive outlook of projecthonduras seemed to fit. It seemed possible that this could offer an alternative. The idea of using Internet and Communication Technology (ICT), and mobilising the efforts of people was also immensely appealing, and I hoped it would not only be enough to sustain my PhD studies for a few years, but that it might also have something to offer the development community both academically and in practice.

Methodologically this thesis has reached this ideal. While the use of ICT in development practice has grown exponentially in recent years, the use of ICT as a research and data collection tool has had considerably less attention in the development studies literature. Indeed, the Internet ethnography, or netnographic approach I used in this research not only appears to be unique in development studies, it was also highly successful. Data collected using traditional fieldwork in Honduras was combined with data collected online to provide a broad and wide-ranging picture of the projecthonduras network, which was also theoretically deep. While there are some obvious limits to the use of Internet data collection in developing world contexts, the use of these methods, alongside more conventional data collection clearly has considerable potential. In an era of rapid globalisation, the use of the Internet can provide access to a wider range of data sources (particularly for research that is 'studying sideways') than traditional methods alone, and can rapidly provide new insights and perspectives on development phenomena.

However despite the success of the data collection methods, the early optimism with which I approached this research was short-lived. Although data from early research for this thesis (much of it gained through an appreciative approach, discussed in Chapters 5 and 6) seemed to support the idea that projecthonduras offered an innovative approach, the more I looked the more contradictions I saw. I was very uncertain about how, or even if, it functioned as a development alternative. As I dug deeper into the network, in the context of political upheaval and crisis, my concerns began to meld into a more cohesive shape, becoming the core of the discussion in Chapters 9 and 10, and shaping the transformation of the research topic from one focused on the alternative model, to one that aimed to explore the underlying assumptions and understandings of the network. These final chapters were therefore challenging to conceptualise and to write. Not only was I critiquing an ostensibly positive and constructive development initiative, I was questioning my early, appreciative research position and effectively critiquing my own role in past expatriate, volunteer work. As discussed in Chapter 4, these issues were in evidence early in the research but, as discussed above, became particularly marked during the political crisis of 2009.

This politicisation of the network and of my research should not have been surprising. Data collected early in the research, prior to the coup suggested the liberal basis of much of the model, and the crisis reinforced these findings. Nevertheless it also reinforced the growing gap between my personal politics and the politics of the network, and as a result there were also significant issues regarding my political position which needed very careful thought. In the end I deliberately chose to integrate the political questions into the research and, as such, the construction of the thesis reflects my politics as a researcher in contemporary Honduras, and my theoretical position within development studies.

The caution with which I did this is, I hope, reflected in the writing. In this process I drew from Ginsburg (1993) and the idea of writing as a dialogue, a 'polyphonic structure', presenting the voices of the research participants juxtaposed with the voice of the researcher. This is what I have tried to do. Using numerous and extended quotes I hope that Marco and projecthonduras speak for themselves. In the end I believe I did not need to abandon either my own politics or my ethical responsibility to my participants in my representation of the network.

The resulting thesis is, I believe, richer for both the methodological contributions, and for the inclusion of political material. As with the intersections of ICT and 'human capital', and the various facets of the projecthonduras philosophy, the early promise of the research was the positive space, but it was one that, by the end, was filled with the messy reality of research findings that were intensely political. Despite this, however, a sense of promise lingered throughout the study – albeit a 'glimmer' of possibility which contrasted with politics throughout the research process and the pages of this thesis.

By focusing the "the hopeful/critical lens of post-development" (McKinnon, 2007, p.772) on projecthonduras, this research has been open both to these glimmers of hope and to the development of the political analysis and the implications of this. In this way the intersection between hopeful and critical post-development has been a generative one, highlighting the complexity of development and development alternatives; the contours of the structural and discursive boundaries in which development alternatives may operate, and the need for development research that is, as Gibson-Graham (2005, p.6) suggest, "generative, uncertain, hopeful and yet fully grounded in an understanding of the material and discursive violence and promises of the long history of development interventions".

Charity vs Justice

> *"Had I but one wish for the churches of America I think it would be that they come to see the difference between charity and justice. Charity is a matter of personal attributes; justice, a matter of public policy. Charity seeks to eliminate the effects of injustice; justice seeks to eliminate the causes of it. Charity in no way affects the status quo, while justice leads inevitably to political confrontation." (Coffin, 2003).*

The quote, posted on the blog of a research contact in Honduras, sums up the political position which I found myself in while undertaking this research. My personal journey and my politics predispose me to a justice-seeking position. Projecthonduras, although ostensibly looking to eliminate the effects of injustice, is largely based on a charitable model, making development a matter of personal attributes and shying away from political confrontation. While I am clearly critical of the charitable model of development and of the network's liberal capitalist roots I am also mindful of the promise that first

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drew my attention to the network, of the hard work and self-sacrifice of the participants in the network (including Marco) and of the lights of hope these organisations provide for some of the poorest and most forgotten of Honduran society.

I am also mindful of the fact that for the most part the participants in projecthonduras are not hard-nosed capitalists. They do not come to take from Honduras, and they do not come for personal profit. They sacrifice to come and give their resources and their lives to helping. They live with and work with Hondurans, and love them. They are compassionate and caring people. What they are doing might be at best a Band-Aid, at worst part of the globalising project, but they sincerely believe they are there to help individuals out of poverty, to heal and to educate. Finally, I am mindful that within the projecthonduras model there remains space for alternatives to take root and within the network there are some examples of organisations providing different approaches, alternative ways in doing development and even, perhaps, the possibility of the emergence of alternatives to development.

As a result of this tension, this is a thesis of light and shadows. As such, ultimately it may be disappointing to many research participants and readers, who either hoped I would provide a glowing account of the potential of the projecthonduras network, or a full-blown critique of its pitfalls and weaknesses. But as light creates shadows, and shadows only exist in the presence of light, so the potential and the critique must co-exist. There is still possibility within the projecthonduras model, room for relationships to be cultivated, for mutual listening and learning, and for new and exciting connections to be made. But that possibility is muted by the shadows, in particular by the underlying neo-colonialism and paternalism of the development model, and by the particular politics of the network which winds its way through the thesis like a shadowy thread. It leads to the conclusion that projecthonduras, like all development efforts, is a political enterprise, with a particular political flavour and possibly with a particular political impact. Although the development efforts of projecthonduras lead to some very small-scale and individualistic impacts, linking together small with small is addition, not multiplication, and while the lives of individuals may be changed for the better, it is still but a drop in the bucket. Whether that is enough depends on one's personal, and necessarily political, convictions, and is a question perhaps best left to Hondurans to answer.

Appendix 1: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire (Version 1, September 2008)

Who: Network participants- conferees

Method: Semi-structured interviews, possibly 2nd open-ended interview

When: During or after 2008 conference

Related research questions:

What is projecthonduras.com?

What activities does the network undertake as individuals?

Has there been any change in member's activities since joining the network?

What (if any) are the tangible/ measurable impacts of the network

What is the nature of the discourse/ communications between members?

Interview Questions:

Part 1

Let's start with something about your work here in Honduras

What is it that drew you to work in Honduras?

What sort of work are you doing here now? What is your purpose for being involved in Honduras?

Now let's talk a little about projecthonduras.com

How did you discover the network?

How do you describe the network to someone who has never heard of it before?

In what way's do you participate or use the network?

Part 2 (or separate interview)

[This series of interviews and observations will form the basis of topic selection for full interviews. Open-ended interviews are based on the AI mini-interview for topic selection.]

This is a little different to the preceding questions, but I want to explore you experiences so far.

What were your initial hopes and expectations when you joined projcthonduras.com?

Can you tell me a highlight of your experience of projecthonduras.com so far?

Is there a story or experience you are aware of that shows how projecthonduras.com has made a difference?

What do you most value about projecthonduras.com?

What are the core factors that enable projecthonduras.com to function? What gives it life?

If you had 3 wishes for the projecthonduras.com network, in order to enhance the health and vitality of the network, what would they be? OR imagine projecthonduras.com 5 years from now, as the best it could be… what would it look like? What would be different?

Appendix 2: Semi-Structured Interview Questionnaire (Final version, October 2009)

Who: Network participants- conferees

Method: Semi-structured interviews, possibly 2nd open-ended interview

When: 2009 Fieldwork trip and online interviews

Related research questions:

What is projecthonduras.com?

What activities does the network undertake as individuals?

Has there been any change in member's activities since joining the network?

What (if any) are the tangible/ measurable impacts of the network

What is the nature of the discourse/communications between members?

Interview Questions:

Let's start with something about your work here in Honduras

What is it that drew you to work in Honduras?

What sort of work are you doing here now? What is your purpose for being involved in Honduras?

Marco talks of 'human capital' for Honduras. How do you understand the idea of 'human capital'? Who is it? Do you think it is having an impact in Honduras?

Now let's talk a little about projecthonduras.com itself

How did you discover the network?

How do you describe the network to someone who has never heard of it before?

Marco calls projecthonduras an alternative model and unconventional movement. Do you think it is? Why/why not?

In what way's do you participate or use the network?

Probe if necessary:

Have you sent email to the lists? If so how often?

Do you check Marco's FB page? The Twitter feed?

How often do you check the website?

How many conferences have you attended?

What would increase your participation?

Has the network impacted the way in which you work in Honduras? If so how?

(any partnerships/ contacts made through the network and impacts of that, has it changed the way you search for information or contacts)

or Has the network changed the way you work in Honduras? If so how?

Is there a story or experience you are aware of that shows how projecthonduras has made a difference?

What do you most value about projecthonduras.com?

What are the core factors that enable projecthonduras.com to function? What gives it life?

Imagine projecthonduras.com 5 years from now, as the most helpful it could be… what would it look like? What would be different?

Finally, if you can, could you list the names of individuals or groups you have made contact or interacted with, through projecthonduras.com, how that contact was made (yahoo list, recommendation from Marco or others, at conference etc.) and any outcomes of those interactions (shared resources, advice given or received, formal partnership, no follow up etc.

Appendix 3: Participant Information Sheet

Discovering an
unconventional
movement for
change:

project honduras.com

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

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About the Researcher

Hi. Thank-you for taking a few minutes
to read this information sheet. I hope you
will consider becoming involved in this
research.

My name is Sharon McLennan, and I am
a PhD candidate in Development Studies
at Massey University in Palmerston
North, New Zealand.

I am a Registered Nurse, with experience
in Internal Medicine and Occupational
Health, and as a Clinical Trial
Coordinator and Primary Health Care
Nurse. I have also been a crewmember on
Mercy Ships, on the Island Mercy and on
the Caribbean Mercy.

This experience sparked my interest in
International Development, which
eventually led to a Masters degree- and
now a PhD in Development Studies. As
part of the Masters degree I competed a
thesis on the role of Medical Missions in
health care in Honduras. This research
will form the basis of a thesis for my
PhD.

I am married to Luis, a Honduran; and we
have 3-year old daughter, Maya.

About the Research

Background

Reading the projecthonduras.com website, the phrases "unconventional movement" and "alternative model" stand out. These phrases caught my attention as they indicate that this network may have something different to offer at a time when many in Development Studies and practise are searching for effective alternatives to conventional development approaches. This research has been designed to explore these possibilities.

Research Aim

To explore the projecthonduras.com network in order to discover what makes it an unconventional movement and alternative model; how it works, what it does, and what it has to contribute to development in Honduras and to Development Studies.

Timeline

Oct 08: *Honduras*, participation at Conference, introductions

Nov 08- Jan 09: *NZ*, completion of full proposal and registration procedures

Feb 09- End 09: *Honduras*, Data collection

2010: *NZ/Honduras*, Data analysis.

Study Methods

This study has been designed as an ethnography; a methodology that provides a holistic description of a culture, society or group, in this case the projecthonduras.com network.

This approach will be complemented by methods based in Appreciative Inquiry (AI). This is a methodology that concentrates on exploring ideas about what is valuable in what a group or organisation is doing, and working out ways this can be built on.

Specific study methods planned include-

- Interviews

- Observation and analysis of forums and website

- Participation at conferences

- Visiting, observation, potentially participating in projects, missions, communities and offices of projecthonduras.com -linked organizations

Other possible methods are-

- Online or email questionaires

- Later focus groups, and on- or off-line feedback and discussion of findings.

Participants Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;

- withdraw from the study at any time;

- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;

- provide information on the under-standing that your name will not be used unless you give permission;

- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.

- ask for the audio/video tape to be turned off at any time.

Ethics

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher named above is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Professor Sylvia Rumball, Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor (Ethics & Equity), telephone +64 6 350 5249, or email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

project honduras.com

Massey University

Appendix 4: Consent Form

Examining an unconventional movement for change: the 'projecthonduras.com' network

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being digitally recorded.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: Date:

....

Full Name -

printed

....

Appendix 5: "Creating an Unconventional Movement for Change in Honduras"

Published on the *Honduras Weekly* website[113], Sunday, 08 August 2010

By Marco Cáceres Di Iorio (2010b)

Every time I return to Honduras for a visit or talk to someone who has returned from Honduras, I ask them…"Aha vos, y como están las cosas?" I always get the same answer. "The value of the lempira has gone down again. The price of frijoles is much higher. We're without electricity, water a few times a day." It's been the same old story for the past 40 years, or ever since I've been engaging my relatives and friends in discussions about why things are the way they are in Honduras -- politically, socially, and economically.

I've heard about all the corrupt governments. I've heard about the destabilizing role of the military. I've heard about the inept tax system that fails to collect needed revenue from people of influence. I've heard about the lack of industrial development, the excessive dependency on agriculture. I've heard about the inequities of land distribution in the countryside. I've heard about malnutrition in children. I've heard about the difficulty in building an infrastructure in a country that is 80% mountainous. I've heard about the inherent laziness of Hondurans.

Amazing. There are never any shortage of answers as to what is wrong with our country. Just like in the United States, people are able to rattle off a litany of problems. Of course, the problem is... How do you resolve the problems? All the solutions I've heard from my friends and relatives never seem to leave me with much hope, unfortunately. Solutions such as revolution or electing a new President from the other party are either too high a price to pay or seldom make much of a lasting difference. More thoughtful solutions such as land reform, education, industrial development, diminishing the power of the military are great in theory, but are hard to implement.

The more I've thought about my native country, the more I realize that it is precisely this difficulty in "implementing" solutions that is the problem. Honduras has few tools for

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http://www.hondurasweekly.com/volunteerism/2831-creating-an-unconventional-movement-for-change-in-honduras, accessed 23/3/2011.

carrying out major projects on a mass scale. And it's not a matter of money or material resources -- or even a new Constitution -- but rather ideas, energy and the knowledge of how to get things done. In other words, human resources. It's also a matter of being able to use these human resources without having to worry about being stone-walled at each turn by a system that, sadly, doesn't function very well.

As much as we love our native country, it is not unfair to say that most of the institutions in Honduras do not function efficiently or professionally -- at least not like we're accustomed to seeing in the US. The fact that Hondurans commonly joke about ineptitude, corruption and greed within their government, the unprofessionalism of their military, and the lack of modern, diversified and internationally competitive businesses, means that there is at least an element of truth to it all.

How do you go about changing major flaws in a country's most powerful institutions? Particularly when a country lacks the most powerful institution of all for change -- a large, well-informed and well-educated middle class with wide access to capital. I think the answer is that you cannot.

Without a powerful, influential and motivated middle class, I do not believe Honduras will ever truly progress. There will be cycles of improvement for our country. The economy will show new signs of life whenever the price of coffee and bananas fluctuate favorably in world markets. Once in a while there will be a spurt of road and hotel construction which will encourage travel and tourism. Once in a while some smart business people will invest and create a new industry such as the harvesting of shrimp or we'll get lucky and already have a commodity in place such as tobacco which caters to some new international fad like cigar smoking.

I believe, however, that all of these things are destined to be cyclical and short-lived without a strong middle class to constantly push our country forward and keep its other institutions honest and functioning effectively. How do you create a middle class in Honduras, when over 75% of its people are poor and are busy simply trying to survive from day to day? How do you expand a middle class that makes up only about 20% of the population when its members are working just to keep up with inflation and numbingly high interest rates and maintain a semblance of economic security? There exists relatively little left-over energy, time or money to invest in getting involved in ideas, projects that do not somehow improve your lot or the well-being of your family and friends.

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This type of situation will never be conducive to implementing serious change in Honduras. Gradual, minor changes will occur in our country through a sort of natural momentum of events, as has always been the case. There will be times that are less bad for our country as a whole, and there will be times such as now when things are very bad. But I fear there will never be times that are truly good for our country. Disregarding the destruction that Hurricane Mitch brought and the economic and social setbacks caused by the overthrow of President Manuel Zelaya, I would not anticipate things in Honduras will be much different twenty years from now as a whole, or fifty years from now... unless we try a different angle on this matter of progress, development.

My assumption is that profound change cannot occur in Honduras solely from within. We have too many things working against us. My assumption also is that help from the outside such as economic aid and strategies for development from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Inter-American Development Bank are not the answer. First, because assistance from international organisations usually comes with strings attached. Second, because all the assistance Honduras has received from these organisations for the past half century have not produced serious change for the country as whole. In some cases such as the agrarian reform efforts of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, World Bank development policies, for example, actually made things worse in Honduras by aggravating the situation between wealthy landholders and landless peasants.

Without delving into a long explanation of how this happened, I can say that generally the reason the policies of international organisations hurt our country is because they emphasize growth. Unfortunately, growth is not the be-all-and-end-all in an impoverished country... Development is. Believe it or not, there is a difference. I'll leave you to figure it out.

The most important reason why help from international organisations is not the answer is because these bodies are not independent. Because they are not self-sustaining financially, they are subject to the interests and politics of the governments that fund them. These organisations are also bureaucratic by their nature and the people that run their programmes have many different agendas, be it personal or professional. For better or for worse, these organisations cannot always be relied upon to place the best interests of

Honduras as a whole at the very top of their priority lists. Sometimes they will. Sometimes they will not. Besides, plain common sense tells you that any individual, any family, any company, or any country is infinitely better off when they do not have to rely on someone or something else for their well-being. Ultimately, Honduras must rely upon itself and its citizens. Again, though, how can it do so when the vast majority of its citizens are powerless? One hell of a quandary isn't it.

I've been called naïve to think this, but it strikes me that there may exist a reasonable number of Hondurans and Honduran-Americans (as well as "friends of Honduras") in the US and in other countries with the capacity to help make a difference in Honduras (working in partnership with the people of Honduras), and they do not even know it. I came to live in the US when I was four years old. For most of my life here, I've seldom run across another individual or family from Honduras. I've known that there are plenty of Hondurans living in New Orleans and Houston, but in all the towns and cities in which I've lived, I've always been a unique nationality. Of course, I've long maintained acquaintances with Hondurans who work at the Honduran Embassy and Consulate in Washington, DC. And in the two decades, I've developed relationships with Hondurans that have immigrated to the US to work as physicians or to study. But these people have been few and far between.

It wasn't until I met a fellow Honduran recently and we started talking that I began to fathom the possibility that there might be lots of Hondurans and Honduran-Americans just like us tucked away in pockets of American society. Many of us have interesting professional careers, backgrounds. Contrary to popular opinion, not all Hondurans that have come to the US are refugees or migrant workers. There are lots of us who have grown up in the US, studied here, and work in a diverse range of professions. There are others of us who are enrolled in universities and colleges around the country. Some of us are here to stay for good. There are others of us who will eventually go back to Honduras.

The point is that, combined, I think we have the potential to be one of Honduras' greatest resources because many of us are unhindered by the internal problems of our native country. While we may not have huge financial resources at our disposal, many of us do have sufficient means to allow us the luxury of volunteering portions of our time to activities that can help Honduras. I've seen the tremendous outpouring of time, effort and

material resources of which Hondurans and Honduran-Americans (not to mention average Americans) in the US are capable.

We are also unhindered by institutions in Honduras. If we want to accomplish something for Honduras, I feel confident we can find a way if we pool our expertise, ideas, and personal contacts. Many of us are independent and creative people who do not stop until we resolve problems, particularly when we have nothing to lose by trying. If there is any one thing that we have to have learned from living in the US it is that anyone can accomplish anything if they work hard enough at it. If we can merge this positive spirit with our talents and resources and the selfless affection that we have for Honduras, along with our personal and professional relationships in Honduras, it would be fascinating to see how much we can do. It would be a rather unconventional movement we would be creating to affect change in our country. But you know, unconventional approaches have a way of gaining momentum sometimes. And, after all, all we're really talking about here is starting to communicate with one another. That's mainly what projecthonduras.com and the Conference on Honduras are about.

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