Topic

The Peace Corps, according to its website, sends Americans abroad to "tackle the most pressing needs of people around the world," which generally pertain to local economies and politics. Therefore, the objective and ideal practice of the Peace Corps seem to embody the concept of localism, as the organization’s members attempt to revive and enhance local economies and governments.

Archive


(I am focusing on Peace Corps initiatives in South Africa. I can gather this information from three of these sources: the Peace Corps website, the documentary, and the volunteer’s blog.)

Conversation


This source discusses the movement of preventing the auction of 114 community gardens in New York City, using this example as an ideal model for any grassroots movement; Smith and Hilda argue that the movement utilized “politics of scale” -- a term we talked about at length in class -- to help further its cause. This concept might be useful in discussing the Peace Corps, as the individual sites to which the organization sends volunteers can be thought of as the lowest level of the scale, while donors, leaders of the organization, and the United States government might constitute higher levels.


This source discusses the trend of “volunteer tourism,” correlating aspects of the practice with those of the Peace Corps and arguing that, although volunteers are invested in the “the social and economic transformation of the global South,” they also view growth and modernization as progress, consequently
harming localism in assisted communities. This source might be very useful for generating claims about transformation, modernization, and whether the Peace Corps might cross the line between the two.

**Question**

I am hoping to investigate whether or not the Peace Corps successfully maintains localism in practice; in other words, I want to argue whether the objectives of the program align with its structure and execution, whether the Peace Corps can be viewed as a localist movement. The broader question of this research might concern whether any incident of change can be considered localist if an outside force instigates and implements it.