

# In field teaching: Lessons from the Himalaya

Jennifer O'Brien, SEED

@Jen\_robrien

[Jennifer.obrien@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:Jennifer.obrien@manchester.ac.uk)





@Jen\_robrien

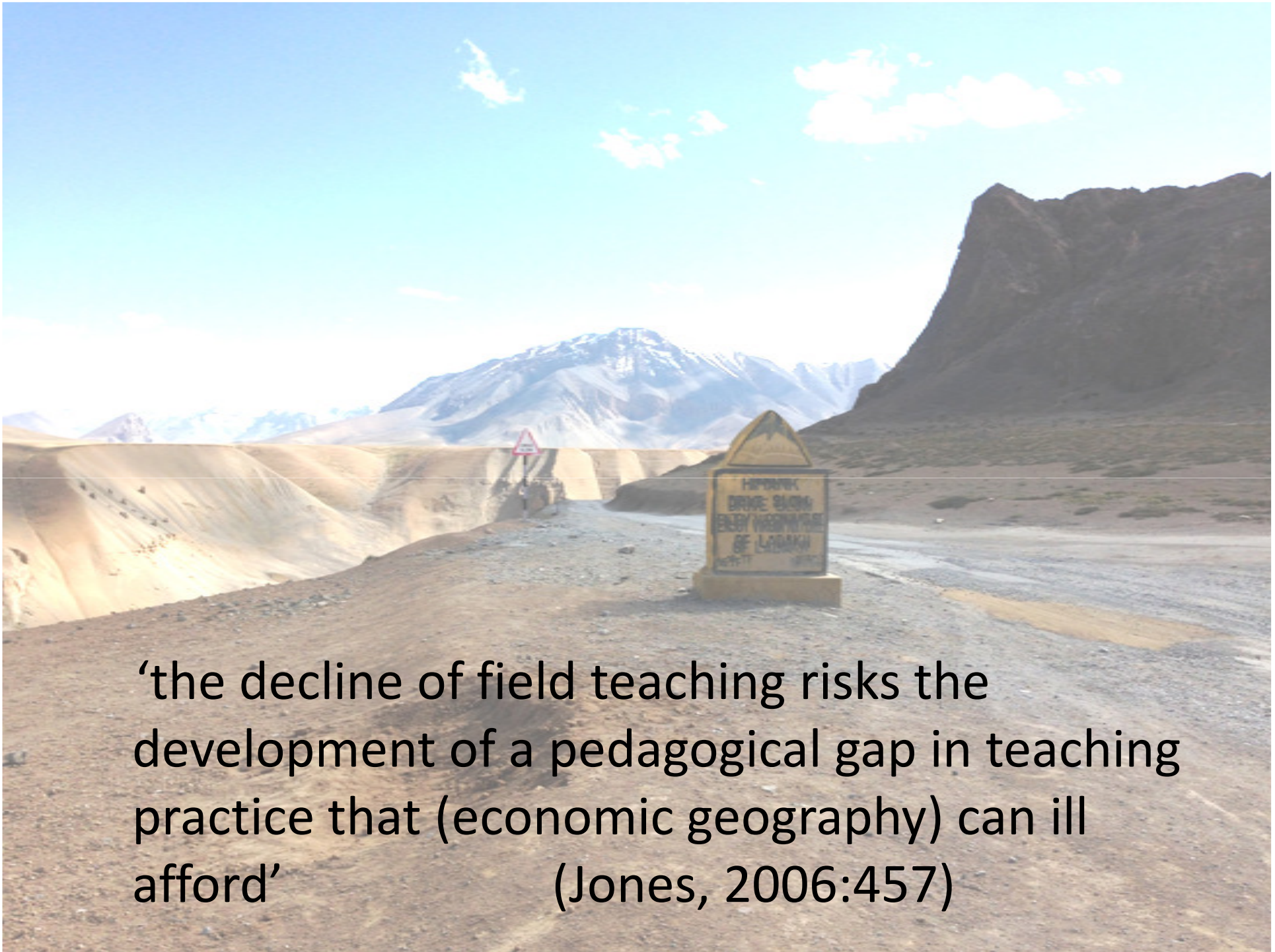
jennifer.obrien@manchester.ac.uk





## Premise

*“In effect, we have begun to reach a point in the UK where fieldwork in its traditional mode of operation is unsustainable; hence the new circumstances in higher education demand fundamental changes in fieldwork delivery”*  
(Higgitt, 1996:392).

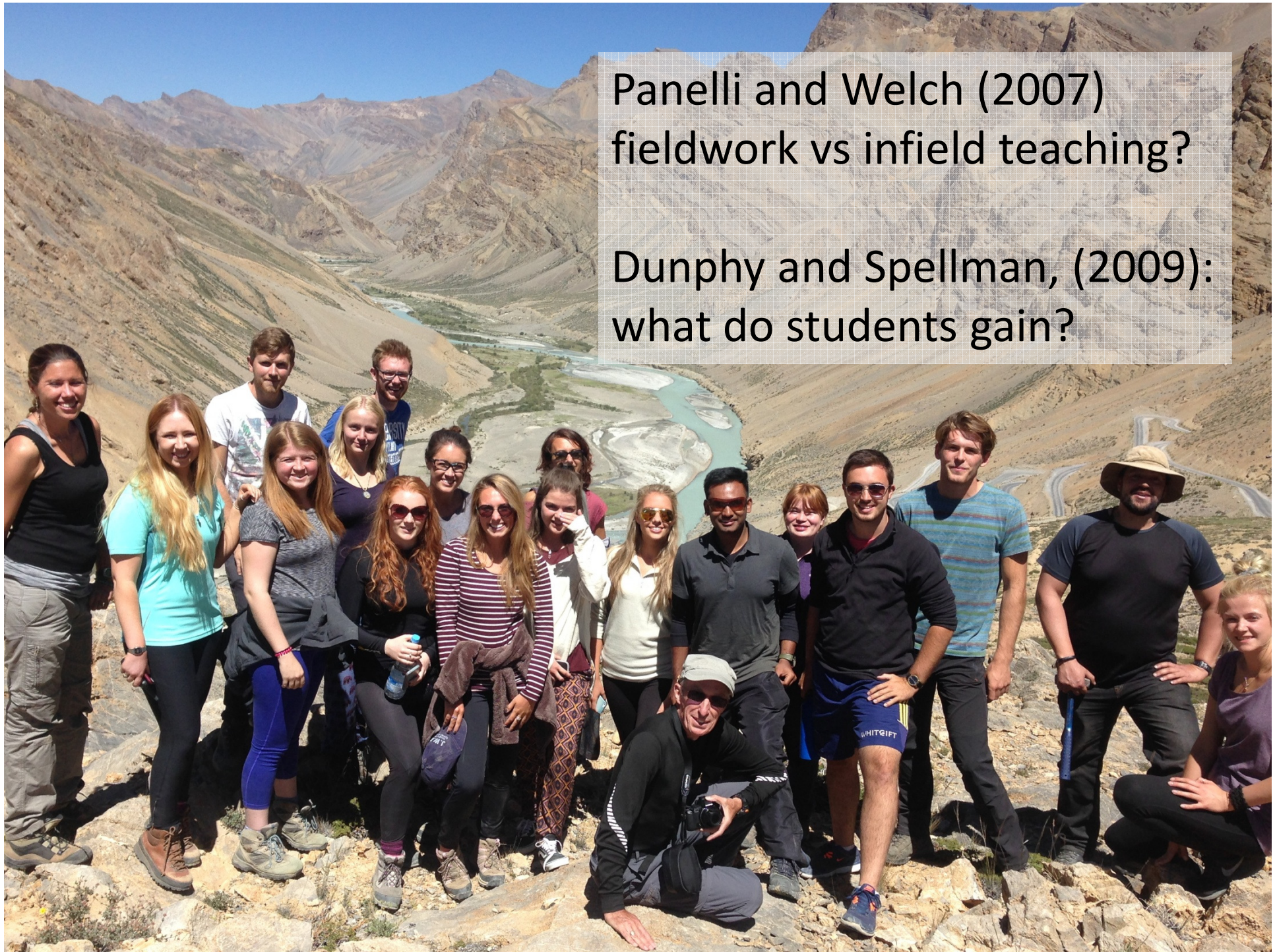


‘the decline of field teaching risks the development of a pedagogical gap in teaching practice that (economic geography) can ill afford’  
(Jones, 2006:457)



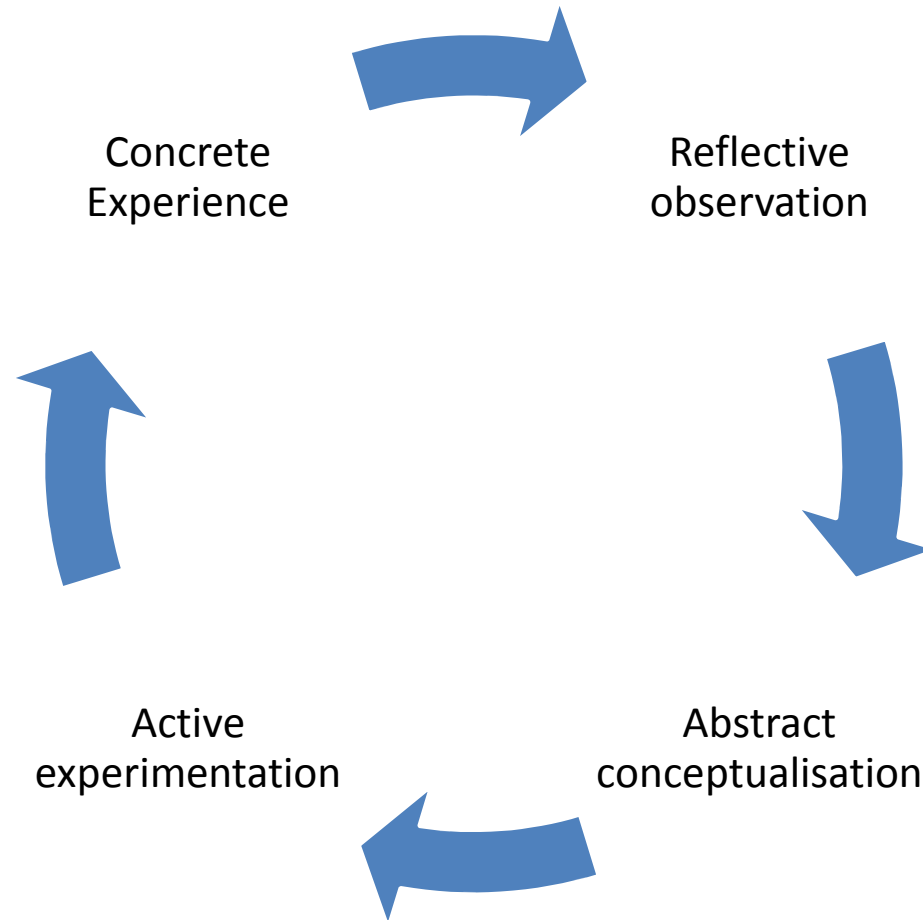
Panelli and Welch (2007)  
fieldwork vs infield teaching?

Dunphy and Spellman, (2009):  
what do students gain?





# Kolb's (1984): The learning cycle



## Skills targeted by fieldwork

- intellectual: to develop the student's understanding of (geography);
- personal: emphasising the importance of vocational and transferable skills;
- technical: competence at research methods, using equipment etc.;
- **inter alia skills:** those skills that are acquired simply by virtue of being in the field.

(Higgitt, 2006: 395)



Intercultural competence :  
“the ability to  
communicate effectively  
and appropriately in  
intercultural situations  
based on one’s  
intercultural knowledge,  
skills, and attitudes”  
(Deardorff ,2004:94; cited  
in Brendel *et al.*, 2016)



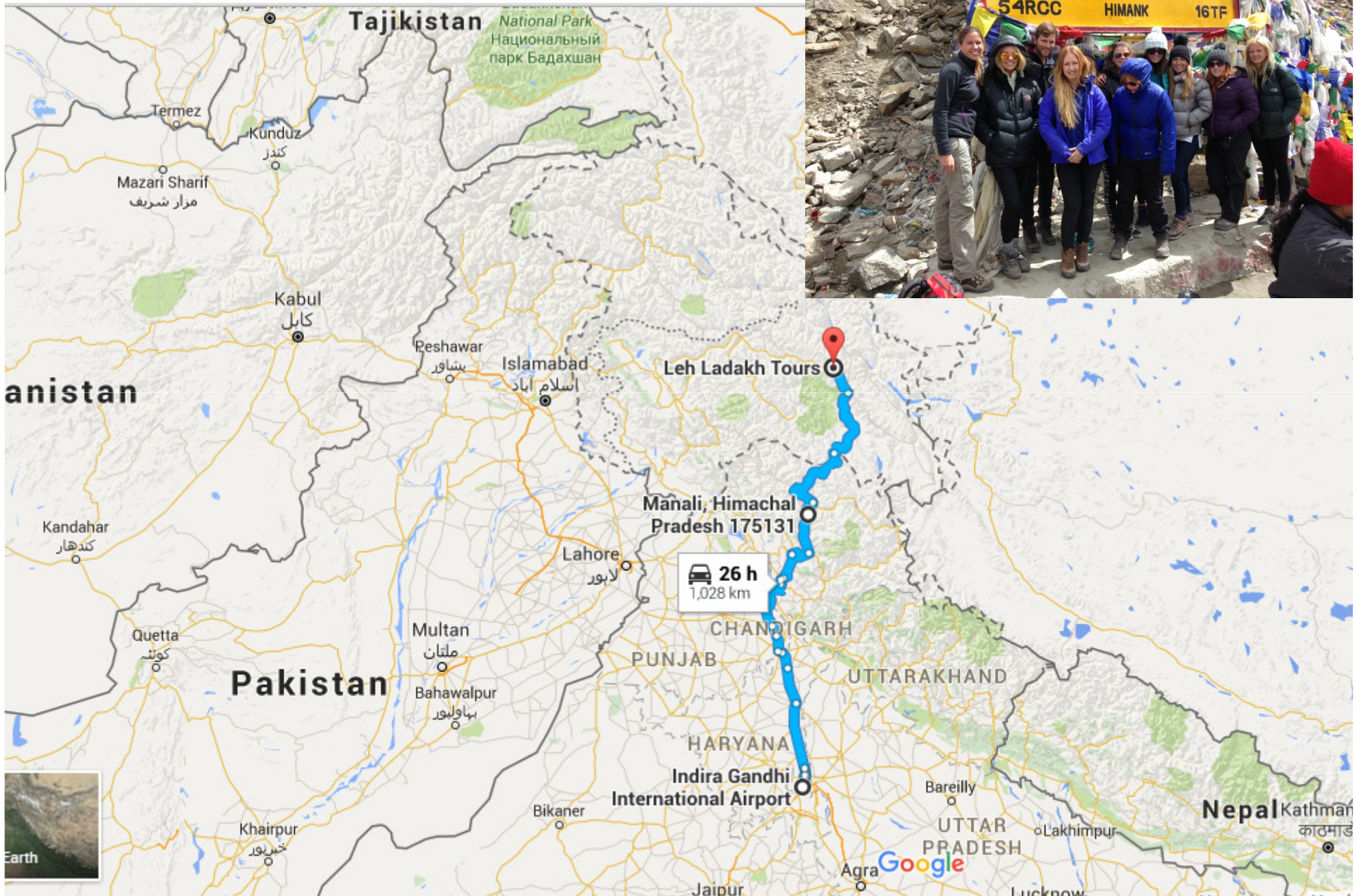




# *By the end of this course you will:*

- Understand the people, practices and processes of the Indian Himalayan region in detail.
- Appreciate the physical, environmental and socio-economic challenges facing a relatively undeveloped region of the world.
- Understand earth surface processes and how they interact with the human world / people on a large scale.
- Have gained in-depth overseas field experience and learned through applied teaching and research.
- Appreciate how geographical and geological approaches can work together to provide holistic understandings of the world.

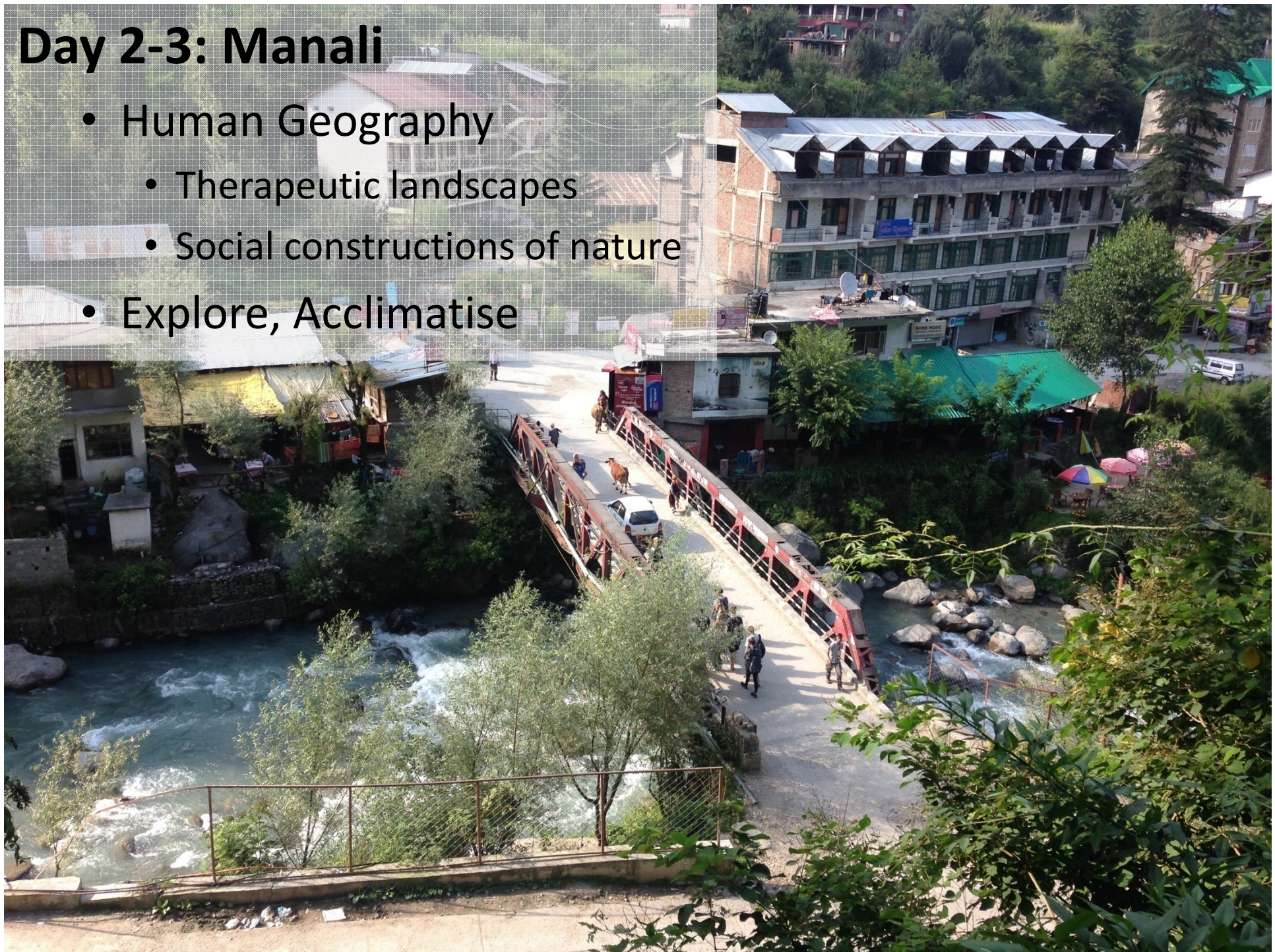






## Day 2-3: Manali

- Human Geography
  - Therapeutic landscapes
  - Social constructions of nature
- Explore, Acclimatise











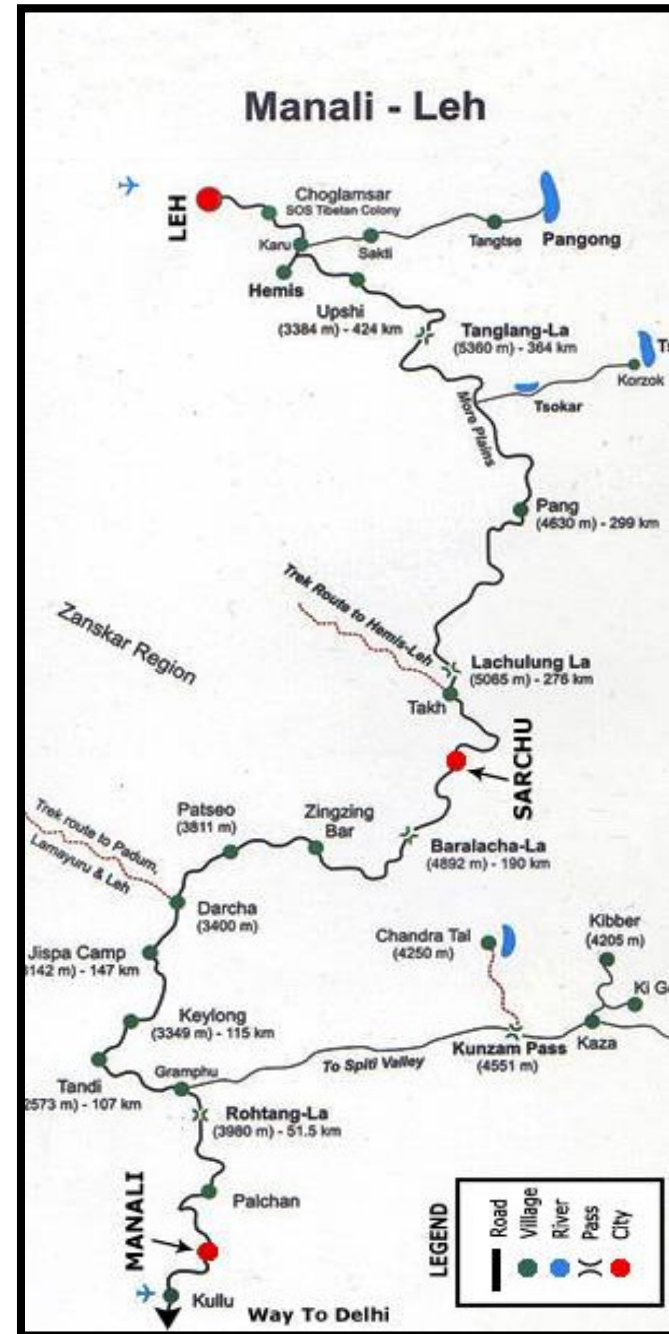
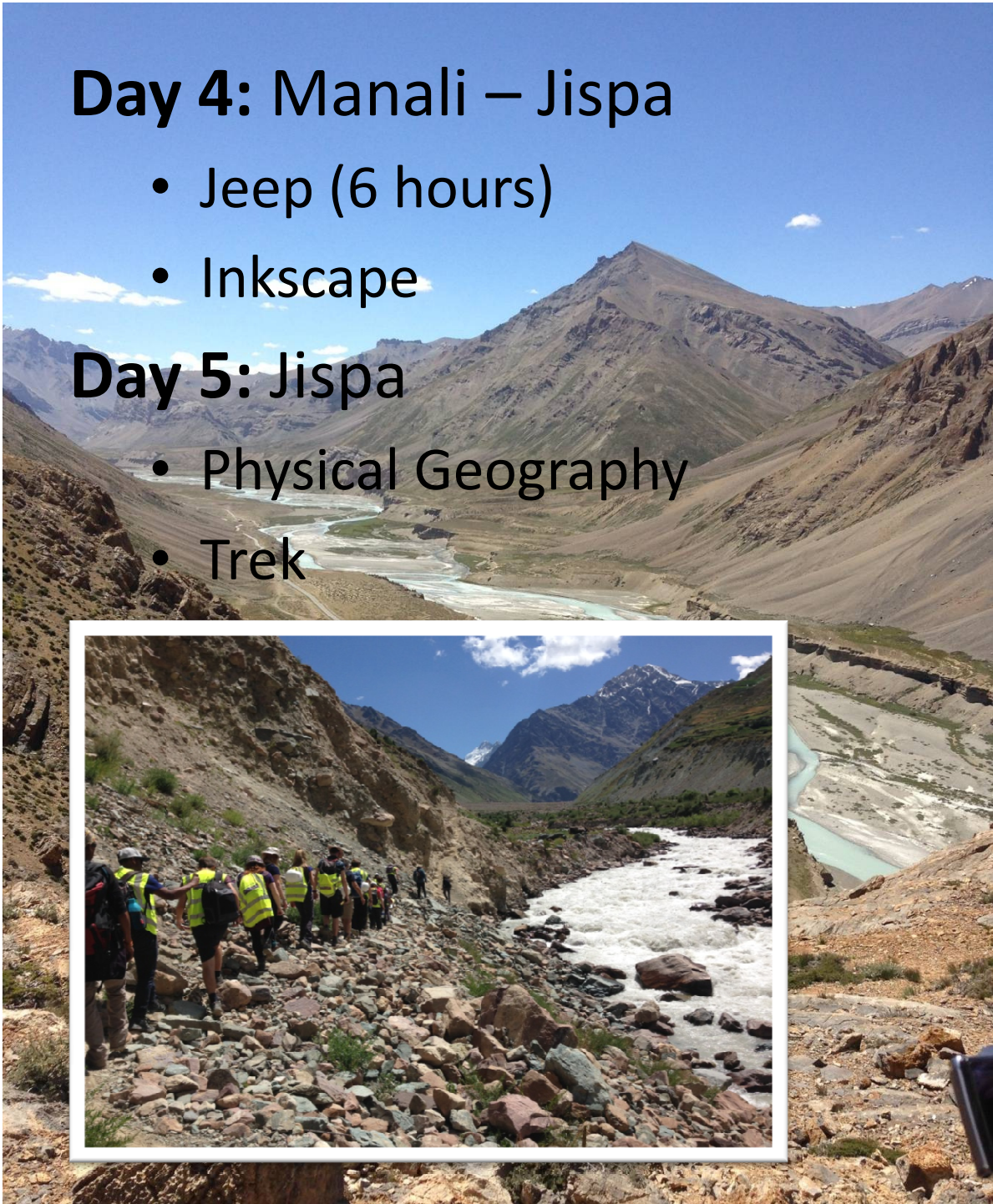


# Day 4: Manali – Jispa

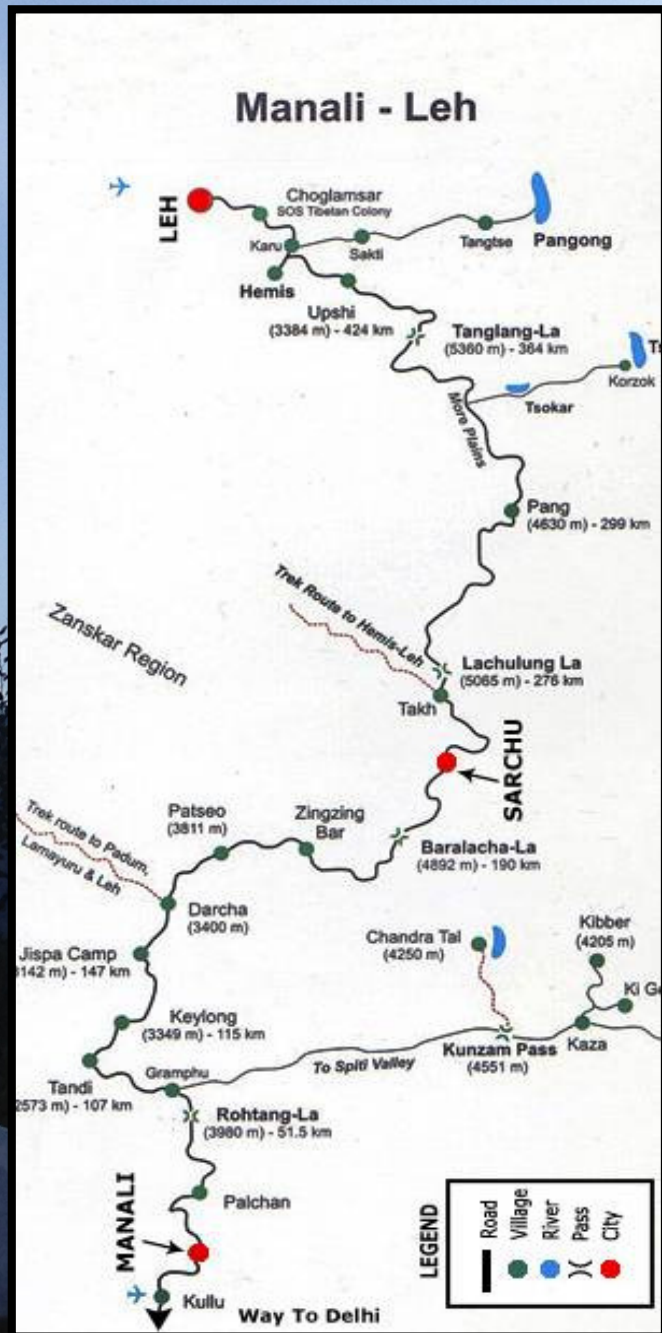
- Jeep (6 hours)
- Inkscape

# Day 5: Jispa

- Physical Geography
- Trek







**Day 6: Jispa – Leh**

**Jeep (15 hours)**



# Day 7-12    Leh Project work















# Assessment

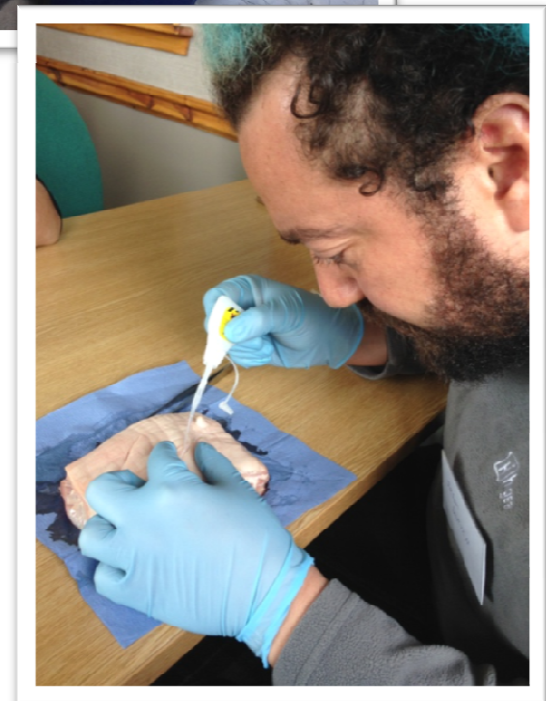
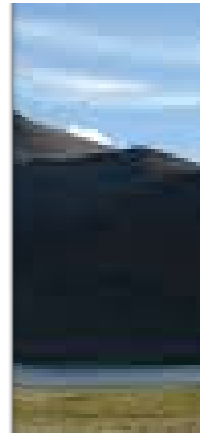
Group presentation on the penultimate day of the trip of the project *results* (**30%** overall; 20% style 80% content) .

Individual piece of coursework based on a detailed write-up and *analysis* of the project on the regional Geography / Geology of the Himalayas in a fitting format to the research (**70%**).

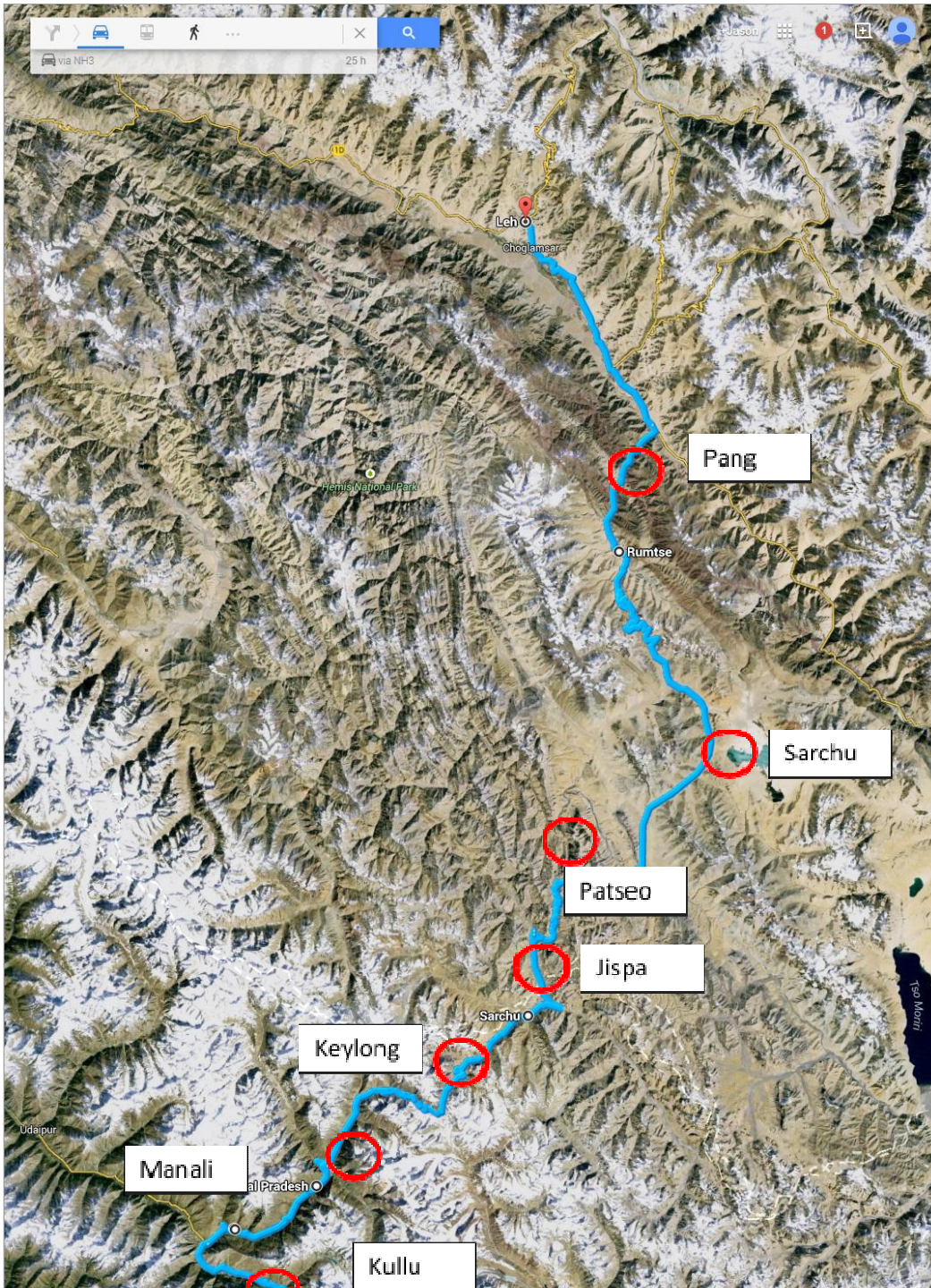


# Practicalities

- Pre-departure briefing
- In country partner(s)
- Health and safety
  - Risk assessment
  - All document externally verified
  - Training
  - Links to travel shop/clinic
  - Wilderness First Responders







Day by day plan  
Medical facilities  
en route

Communications:

- Day by day
- GPS tracker

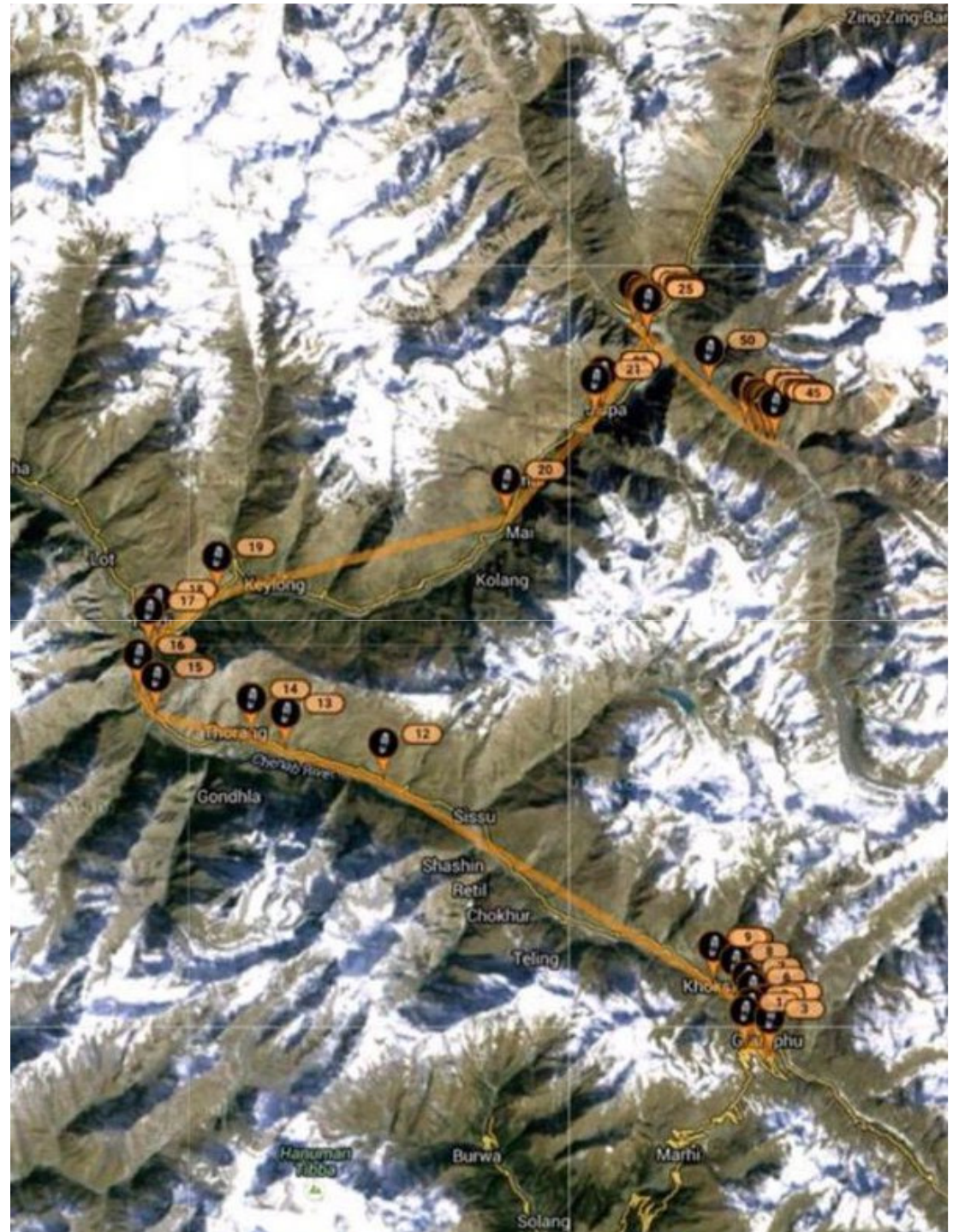


Day	Date	Itinerary	To/From UK General Catch up	From UK to trip (in emergency)	Between group/students to field staff	Emergency from India	Info
1	28/8	Arrival in Delhi transfer to Manali	UK mob in Delhi; INT	UK mob in Delhi; INT; Uni Mess LT + 91 11 22619900 Jen: +44 (0) 7740366267 Dortchy: +44 (0) 7786 335 295	LT + 91 11 22619900 Jen: +44 (0) 7740366267 Dortchy: +44 (0) 7786 335 295 UK mob; INT	UK mob; Ind mobs; Uni Mess	#UoMHim15
2	29/8	Manali	Possibly UK mob; STDs; INT	INT; Uni Mess LT + 91 11 22619900 Poss UK mobs	Possibly UK mob; int; STDS; Ind mobs; Working in groups; Regular check ins	Ind mobs; Uni Mess SPOT GPS Tracker	#UoMHim15
3	30/8	Manali	Possibly UK mob; STDs; INT	INT; Uni Mess; LT + 91 11 22619900 Poss UK mobs	Possibly UK mob; int; STDS; Ind mobs; Working in groups; Regular check ins	Ind mobs; Uni Mess SPOT GPS Tracker	#UoMHim15
4	31/8	Manali to Jispa	Possibly STDs	Uni Mess via SPOT GPS; Ind mobs; LT + 91 11 22619900	Together all the time	SPOT GPS; Ind mobs; hotel mobile: LT	Possibly Twitter
5	01/9	Jispa	Possibly STDs	Uni Mess via SPOT GPS; Ind mobs; LT + 91 11 22619900	Together all the time	SPOT GPS; Ind mobs; hotel mobile; LT	Possibly Twitter
6	02/9	Jispa to Leh	Possibly STDs	Uni Mess via SPOT GPS; Ind mobs; LT + 91 11 22619900	Together all the time; Ind mobs	SPOT GPS; Ind mobs; LT	Unlikely today
7-12	03/9	Leh	INT; STDs	Uni Mess; Ind mobs; LT + 91 11 22619900	Staying together; regular check ins. STDs to Ind mobs. LT office and LT + 91 11 22619900	SPOT GPS; Ind mobs; LT	~UoMHim15
13	09/9	Leh-Delhi flight	INT; STDs; most UK mobs	Uni Mess; Ind mobs; LT + 91 11 22619900; Jen: +44 (0) 7740366267 Dortchy: +44 (0) 7786 335 295	Together most of the time: Ind mobs; UK mobs	Ind mobs; UK mobs; LT	~UoMHim15
14	10/9	Delhi	INT; STDs; most UK mobs	Uni Mess; Ind mobs; LT + 91 11 22619900; Jen: +44 (0) 7740366267 Dortchy: +44 (0) 7786 335 295	Together most of the time: Ind mobs; UK mobs	Ind mobs; UK mobs; LT	~UoMHim15
15	11/9	Airport	INT; STDs; most UK mobs	Uni Mess; Ind mobs; LT + 91 11 22619900; Jen: +44 (0) 7740366267 Dortchy: +44 (0) 7786 335 295	Together most of the time: Ind mobs; UK mobs	Ind mobs; UK mobs; LT	~UoMHim15

From us to Uni; from Uni to us; from parents to Uni; from Uni to parents; from students to parents



# SPOT GPS Tracker





# Positionality in pedagogy

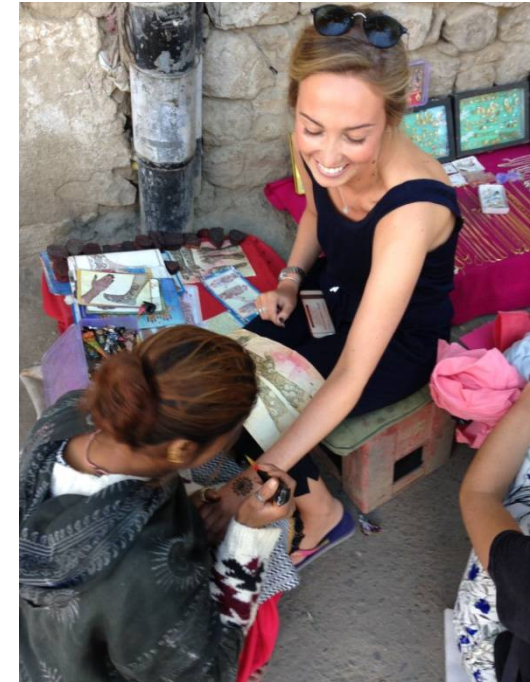
A group of six students are performing a circle dance in front of the Taj Mahal. They are standing on a paved area, holding hands, and some have their arms raised. The Taj Mahal is visible in the background, framed by a large, ornate archway. The scene is set in a well-maintained garden with green lawns and trees.

Why did students chose the module (Dunphy and Spellman, 2009)?



# Positionality in pedagogy

- Shifting (gendered) positionality



Assessment – UEQs

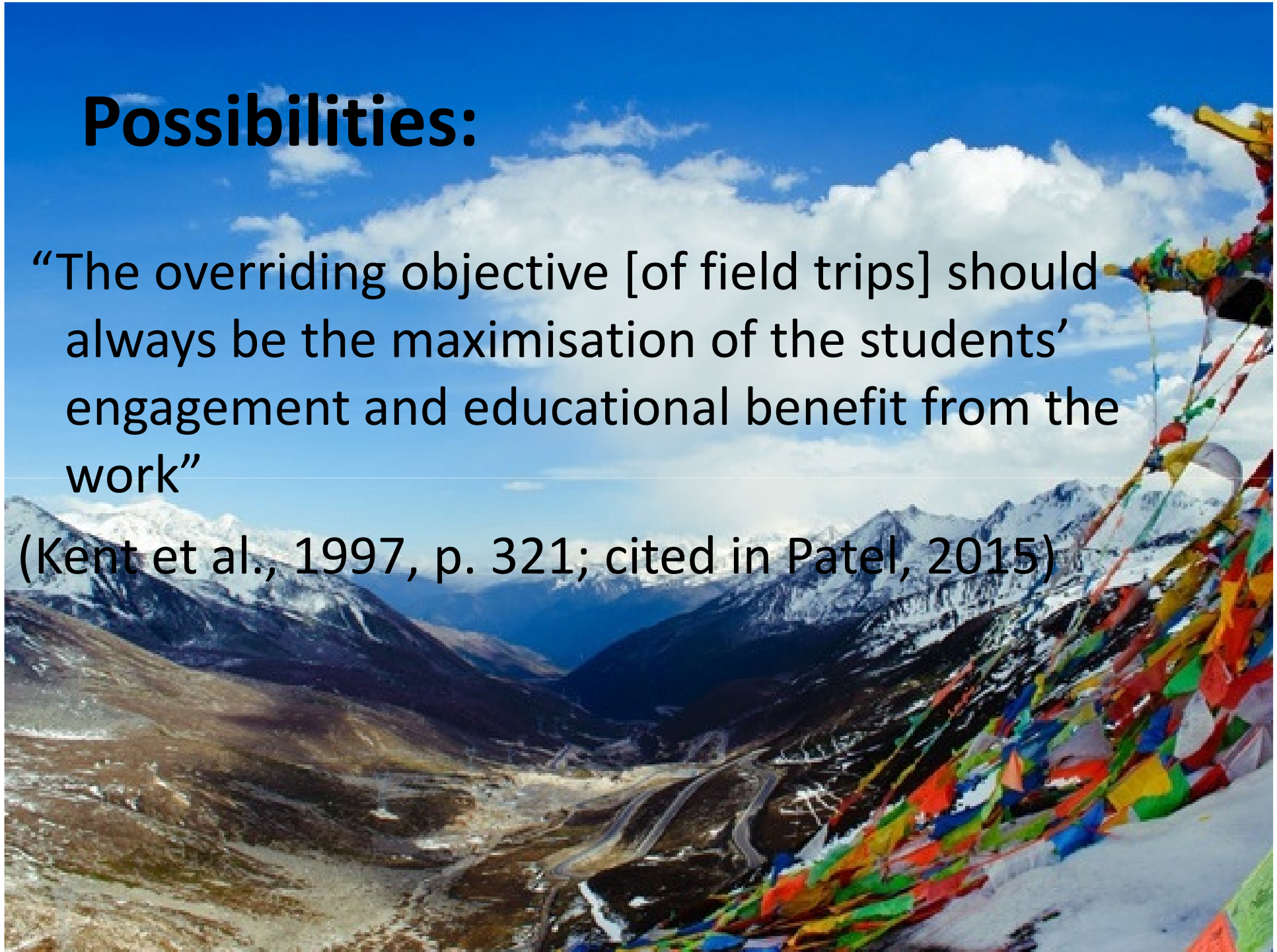
Field work vs infield teaching (Panelli and Welch, 2007)?



# Possibilities:

“The overriding objective [of field trips] should always be the maximisation of the students’ engagement and educational benefit from the work”

(Kent et al., 1997, p. 321; cited in Patel, 2015)





# Going forward

- Splitting human and physical teaching
- Larger group
- Down time
- More staff and equal balance
- Pre departure expectations

Jennifer.obrien@manchester.ac.uk





# References



- Brendel, N., Aksit, F., Aksit, S., & Schrüfer, G., (2016) Multicultural group work on field excursions to promote student teachers' intercultural competence, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 40:2, 284-301,
- Deardorff, D. K. (2004). The identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of international education at institutions of higher education in the United States. (Unpublished dissertation). North Carolina State University, Raleigh
- Higgitt, M., (1996) Addressing the new agenda for fieldwork in higher education, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 20:3, 391-398,
- Jones, A. (2006) Engaging with Economic Geography in the 'Real' World: A Central Role for Field Teaching, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 30:3, 457-462,
- Kent, M., Gilbertson, D., & Hunt, C. (1997). Fieldwork in geography teaching: A critical review of the literature and approaches. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 21, 313–332.
- Patel, k., (2015) Teaching and learning in the tropics: an epistemic exploration of “the field” in a development studies field trip, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 39:4, 584-594,
- Panelli , R.,& Welch, R., (2005) Teaching Research Through Field Studies: A Cumulative Opportunity for Teaching Methodology to Human Geography Undergraduates, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 29:2, 255-277,
- Robson, E., (2002) 'An Unbelievable Academic and Personal Experience': Issues around teaching undergraduate field courses in Africa, *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 26:3, 327-344,