

# Combining Volunteer Tourism and Development Studies

A case study of development students' reflections on  
volunteering in the Global South



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# Abstract

Volunteer tourism (VT) has over the past decades rapidly increased and many young individuals travel to the Global South with intentions to develop communities and travel. Critique has however indicated that unskilled young individuals do not contribute to the development of the community, rather the opposite. This study examines how students of development studies at Lund University reflect back on their volunteer trip, as they hold knowledge within both the field of development and volunteer tourism. The study has used a qualitative case study design to interview students by conducting two focus groups. The material has been analysed based on three frameworks; cosmopolitanism, neo-liberal critique and development education. The findings of this study indicated that development students reflect back on their VT experience with insightful critique towards VT in relation to post-colonial critical theories. Some of the students' reflections indicate a developed pessimism and cynicism towards the field of development in general. Although students were critical of VT, students also show insightful reflections of potential cultural benefits of VT, they however reflect on themselves gaining more cultural knowledge than the host communities. This research contributes academically by increasing the understanding of VT and its outcomes for volunteers and host communities.

*Key words:* Volunteer tourism, development studies, cultural exchange, post-colonial critique, practical learning

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Research Problem

Our increasingly moralized society is progressively reflecting our habits regarding tourism (Butcher 2003: 30). The conventional mass tourism industry has over the past decades however received critique for destroying cultural diversity, damaging environments and deteriorating authenticity of cultural expression through a commodification of their culture and their environment (Butcher 2003). The ‘cultural convergence’, is commonly held as a fairly new concept. The ‘Americanization of culture’ or ‘cultural levelling’, are terms describing the destruction of culture (Butcher 2003: 98). Out of this critique have several alternative forms of travelling emerged in the global South. One of them is volunteer tourism (VT) which Stephen Wearing (2001:1) defines as 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 into aspects of society or environment”. VT was thus seen as more culturally and environmentally friendly and a tool for achieving sustainable development, as well as better for the tourist as it encouraged a critical reflection of the ‘developed’, and more enlightening on other lifestyles and societal approaches than the ‘western life’ (Butcher 2003:7).

VT has grown immensely in popularity over the past decade and a half and is continuing to gain ground in the tourist sector. Critique towards VT has also emerged, especially during the past decade and although there is no academic consensus on the consequences of VT there is a vast amount of critique towards VT which argues for VT being a product of, and constructing neo-colonialism and dependencies (Wearing and McGehee 2013, Butcher 2003: 98, 101, Calkin 2013, Keese 2011, Palacios 2010, Guttentag 2009, Barbieri et al. 2012, Pluim and Jorgenson 2012, Simpson 2004, Sin 2010). The opposing view is rather stressing the potential benefits of VT which lie in the exchange of culture and knowledge that benefits all participants (volunteers, the local population and the local village/town/city) (Wearing and McGehee 2013, Ooi and Laing 2010, Gray and Campbell 2007, Tomazos and Butler 2010, McGehee and Santos 2005). The challenge for the academic discussion on VT is to form an informed picture of the discussion of VT, and to not diminish it to a discussion of ‘good or bad’, but to shape a nuanced picture where all aspects of VT are represented.

## 1.2 Purpose and research question

Within the neo-colonial critique towards VT, scholars argue that volunteers are mainly interested in the benefits volunteering can bring for oneself, as well as exploring exotic destinations. Opposing scholars recognize the fact that volunteers have altruistic motivations for volunteering combination with selfish interest which may create a type of ‘reciprocal altruism’ (Guttentag 2009).

I have myself engaged in VT on two occasions (in 2009 and 2012). The idea for this thesis topic and the issue of VT is something that I have been wondering about since both of my volunteer trips in general, but since studying BIDS in particular. I am especially interested in whether the VT discussion is as simple as either being good or bad or if there are other dimensions to the issue. I am interested in the nuanced characteristics of VT that explain this new and complex phenomenon.

Previous studies on volunteers have been made without the volunteers having any academic knowledge within development studies. As students within development studies have knowledge on critical theories to development such as neo-colonialism and dependency theory, it may be valuable for a deeper understanding of VT to study people with knowledge from both sides of this coin; volunteering and development.

Thus, I will conduct two focus groups that will be sampled from students within the bachelor in development studies (BIDS) program at Lund University. I aim to understand how students with the knowledge of development studies who have themselves volunteered perceive VT. Additionally, I am interested in understanding how the knowledge of development has altered their perception of VT. My assumption of this research is that people who educate themselves on issues concerning development hold a more insightful perception of VT. Therefore, I assume students within the BIDS program will be able to critically reflect on their volunteer trip, and that their view on VT has been altered by studying development studies due to the sharp and at times uncompromising critique to development that students are introduced to within development studies.<sup>1</sup>

I have decided to conduct an explanatory study as I wish to understand *how* students’ perceive volunteering with the accumulation of knowledge of development studies. My intention is to show why and how volunteering in the Global South in combination with studying development studies has affected the

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<sup>1</sup> Courses such as UTVC11, UTVC12, UTVC13 and UTVC15 have provided students with knowledge on critical theories to development. See Appendix C for a description of these courses.

students' perception on volunteering (Punch 2005: 15). The findings of my research will be used to answer the following research question:

**“How do BIDS students reflect back on their VT experience in the Global South?”**

My sub-questions will aim to answer what their initial conclusions after completing their volunteer trip? Have their conclusions on volunteer tourism changed after studying development studies? What conclusions of their own volunteering can they draw when connecting unskilled voluntary labour and development?

### 1.3 Definition of volunteer tourism

In this study, I will use a broad definition of volunteer tourism (VT) as the focus of this study will be put on the *volunteering activity*, and not what specific type of volunteering the students engaged in. I will therefore draw on the definition by Stephen Wearing who defines VT as an activity where individuals “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 into aspects of society or environment” (Wearing 2001:1).

### 1.4 Delimitations

The topic of VT is quite broad which means that I will not be able to address all aspects of VT. As I aim to conduct a case study this creates natural delimitations where I will only examine sampled students of BIDS and how *they* reflect back on VT. I do not aim to be able to generalize the result of the study to the field of VT. Due to a limited amount of words allowed in this research, I will not be able to go into depth with what kind of tourist activities the students engaged in. This study will put its focus and problematize western students who volunteer in the Global South. I will not exclude aspects of VT that relates to the broader field of VT such as tourism or the expanding VT industry, but I will focus on the students' reflection of their volunteering engagements.

## 1.5 Disposition

So far I have outlined the main research problem of VT which I aim to address through conducting focus groups to answer the question of how BIDS student reflect back on their VT experience in the Global South. To meet the purpose of this research, I will in the following sections introduce the subject presented in a literature review which will offer an overview of the current theoretical and empirical literature on the topic of VT. The subsequent section will present the qualitative methodology I will use to conduct this study by employing two focus groups throughout the case study. Henceforth I will present the theoretical framework I will use in order to analyse the material from the focus groups. Thereafter my material will be outlined in combination with an analytical discussion on the students' reflections on VT. The final section will present my major findings and concluding remarks of this study, as well as suggestions for further research.

## 2 Literature Review

The following chapter will review current literature on VT. The literature that I have chosen derives from both theoretical and empirical articles and books and will give an overview of the academic field of VT.

International tourism has become one of the largest industries with receipts of \$US856 billion (Keese 2011). If looking at the 50 poorest countries, 49 of them are dependent on tourism as their main source of foreign exchange (Barnett 2008). Guttentag (2009) argue that there are 1.6 million people partaking in volunteer tourism every year. During the past decades, new forms of tourism have emerged, and are increasing rapidly. It is evident that the characteristics of our society reflect upon how we engage in travels. Tourism illustrates global politics as it legitimizes and informs the ways in which we engage and understand other places and people (Vrasti 2012: 22). Hence the reasons behind the emergence of VT lie in the society we live in. The unique features of VT are that it connects tourism to development, two previously only indirectly connected entities. This has made tourism an even bigger actor within development, and it has made ‘the tourist’ a new actor within the development discourse (Calkin 2013, Keese 2011, Simpson 2004). NGOs (non-governmental organization) have traditionally relied on donations and grants from multi-lateral organizations, governments, individuals and foundations to finance their work. The main source of grants for VT organisations is however the volunteer, which proves the new power of the volunteer as a new actor in the aid industry (Keese 2011). Companies and NGOs are emerging and grasping on to the demand for unconventional travel experiences, and at the same time as they too, are becoming actors within aid industry.

Guttentag (2009) argue that altruism is a part of the reasons behind volunteering, however not without the benefits for oneself, which in turn becomes a type of ‘reciprocal altruism’. “Volunteers want a destination where they can help others and learn about global issues. But they also want exotic places where they can escape and experience fun and adventure. They want to get off the beaten path, but at the same time need to feel safe, comfortable and in control. They seek in-between spaces that are both different and familiar” (Keese 2011: 262). Critical scholars argue that the volunteer identity is based on the belief in the much needed good intention to help develop the host community, which does not mind posing as the guinea pig for inexperienced development practitioners (Calkin 2013). Other scholars however argue for the volunteer identity consisting of more than the ‘do-gooder’ and argue for VT already being in part a product of social awareness from the volunteers’ side, from the VT facilitators that enables the



activities as well as the host communities which are open to alternative forms of tourism and development (McGehee and Santos 2005). McGehee and Santos (2005) argue that before individuals are inclined to activism and mobilized, they must become aware of inequalities and problems that exist. Therefore, in contrast to the opposing view, this view stresses the fact that the volunteer identity revolves around the desire to actually exchange knowledge and ideas rather than the notion of the image of the self-sacrificing altruistic volunteer.

The existing literature on VT revolves around on the one hand strong critique towards making volunteers (often young adults and university students) experts, authorising the volunteers responsibility and knowledge, characteristics that are vested within the volunteer role, which may often be unjustified as foreign volunteers do not necessarily have the capability to transfer skills and knowledge or deliver aid (Palacios 2010).

On the other hand, scholars argue that one of the main benefits of VT is that volunteers and local people will benefit from the cultural and social exchange, as well as the personal growth that especially volunteers will experience which may lead to greater understanding and compassion for others (Guttentag 2009, Barbieri et al 2012, Pluim and Jorgenson 2012, Ooi and Laing 2009, Wearing and McGehee 2013, Gray and Campbell 2007 and Potter et al. 2008: 334-338).

## 3 Method

In this section I will begin with explain why I chose to conduct a qualitative case study design. Subsequently, this section will discuss data collection methods as well as secondary data and research quality. Finally, this chapter will outline the analytical framework and ethical considerations.

### 3.1 Research design

I will use a case-study design as I perceive the *case* (BIDS students who have been volunteers in the global south) as the focus of interest in its own right (Bryman 2012: 68, Punch 2005: 145). I wish to provide an in-depth elucidation of this case; hence the most appropriate design for my research is the case-study. My ambition is to use an idiographic approach as I aim to illuminate the unique aspects of this case (Bryman 2012: 69). As I have chosen a case-study design, I am not aiming towards either being able to generalise the entire group of volunteers in the Global South, or all BIDS students (Bryman 2012: 69-70). Drawing on Bryman (2012: 70), I argue that my case represents a unique type of case. As the demand for volunteer tourism is rapidly increasing (Butcher 2003) parallel with the interest for sustainable development, the combination of the two subjects creates not only a current, but a unique case.

### 3.2 Data collection

#### 3.2.1 Focus groups

I aim to conduct two focus groups as I am interested in the ways that individuals discuss volunteer tourism as members of a group rather than as individuals (Bryman 2012: 501, Esaiasson et al. 2007: 361). I am interested in how the students respond to each other's views and how they build up a view from the interaction that occurs within the group (Byman 2012: 501). In choosing to conduct focus groups, I aim to examine the way the students in conjunction with one another construe the topic of volunteer tourism. I will use the focus groups as primary sources which this study is based on. My ambition is to develop an understanding of why students feel the way they do. By challenging the students, my intention is to create more of a discussion than in a 'normal' interview. Focus groups will enable the possibility to study how individuals collectively make

sense of VT and construct meaning around it (Bryman 2012: 504). My ambition with conducting focus groups is that the interviewees will be able to direct the discussion of the session to some extent. Thus, the interviewees' point of view is more likely to be presented than in a traditional interview (Bryman 2012: 504).

I will use an electronic recording device to record my focus groups as it will simplify making sure to keep track of who says what. A recording device will help me to not only understand what they say, but also *how* the interviewees say it, what type of language they employ (Bryman 2012: 482). Subsequently after conducting the focus groups, I will transcribe the material gathered for the focus group sessions.

To be able to understand the result of my research, I will describe the dynamics of my focus groups in the following two subsections.

- Focus group 1:  
This focus group was conducted on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014, located in Geocentrum 1, and consisted of four students. The dynamic of this group were such that the students were friendly and interested in one and other. The students showed respect toward allowing each other to speak, and were cautious to not interrupt one another.
- Focus group 2:  
This focus group was conducted on May 8<sup>th</sup> 2014, located in Geocentrum 1. The group was intended to consist of six students, one student could however not participate. The dynamics of this group was instantly very encouraging and students were eager to talk, which sometimes resulted in that the discussion went off topic, and that some students discussed more than others.

### 3.2.2 Sampling

I will use a purposive sampling in order to sample participants who are relevant to my research question. I have therefore chosen to sample my participants from the Bachelors of Science in Development Studies (BIDS) program at Lund University. I will request participants who are students of the BIDS program and have been volunteers in the global south. I will get in contact with the participants via their student-email and via Facebook.

I plan on having approximately 10 participants in my study and divide them into two groups. To have two focus groups will be sufficient in gaining the material needed for this bachelor's thesis research, as I run the risk of having too much data to transcribe for the amount of time available for this study. With more than two focus groups, the amount of data to analyse will be too large for this particular study (Bryman 2012: 505). To have approximately five participants in each focus group will suite the characteristics of this research topic. As students

are likely to have a lot to say on the topic of VT, as well as the topic may be controversial or complex, it is appropriate to not have more than five participants (Bryman 2012: 507). A small group will to a greater extent enable interviewees to have a diversity of opinions, or disagreements as it may be less tendency for one person to dominate the session (Bryman 2012: 508).

### 3.3 Research quality

In order to ensure the quality of the research it is important to ensure the reliability and validity of the study, however this applies more to quantitative research (Bryman 2012: 389). As qualitative research differs to a great extent from quantitative research, the criteria used to ensure quality and trustworthiness will therefore be based on *credibility*, *transferability* and *conformability*, instead of internal reliability and validity and external reliability and validity (Bryman 2012: 390). To ensure my case's *credibility*, I have chosen three types of analytical frameworks to best suit my material. My themes to overlap, but do however slightly vary. Therefore I have chosen to have theoretical frameworks which are similar, but highlight different aspect of VT (Esaiasson et al. 2007: 64). As this research is a case study, I do not aim to be able to generalize the result; therefore this enhances the *transferability* of my study (Esaiasson et al. 2007: 64). To ensure objectivity is scientifically impossible within social science (Bryman 2012: 392). I will however strive for preventing biases to increase *conformability*. Although, I remain aware of the fact that I do not operate in a moral vacuum, and will be influenced by my own interpretations, therefore I acknowledge that my research include possible biases, because from my ontological standpoint, research cannot be value free.

### 3.4 Analysis

To analyse my data, I will use a thematic analysis. The themes of my data will be the product of thoroughly reading and *rereading* the transcripts that make up my data (Bryman 2012: 579). To analyse the themes and subthemes I will use a 'Framework' approach which is a matrix based approach for synthesising and ordering the data, in order to create an index of central themes (Bryman 2012: 579). When I search for themes I will look for repetitions within the text. The main themes will also be presented in Appendix B.

### 3.5 Ethical considerations

Before conducting the focus group sessions, I will make sure to inform my participants about the process of my research and what the purpose of this study is, what their involvement means to the study, as well as what the material will be used for. I will also make sure to inform them about that their responses will be anonymized and of course told in confidentiality (Bryman 2012:142). I will also make sure to inform my interviewees that they are welcome to read a copy of my study when finished, which I may send to them.

I am fully aware of the fact that I am not conducting this research in a moral vacuum; I may influence my interviewees' responses in a variety of ways including, my age, my ethnicity, my gender, the way I dress and so on. I remain aware of the fact that there would have perhaps been different results if a different researcher than myself would have conducted the focus group sessions.

## 4 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework I will use is divided into three parts: (1) cosmopolitanism and volunteer tourism, (2) neo-liberalism and volunteer tourism, (3) education and volunteer tourism.

Each framework will deal with a theme in the *next* section: the analysis section. The first framework will relate to cultural exchange, the second will deal with career-related themes and the third theoretical framework will deal with issues concerning characteristics of theoretical education in development studies in combination with practical skills. I will aim at separating the themes, I am however aware of the fact that they do overlap to a great extent.

### 4.1 Cosmopolitanism and volunteer tourism

To analyse the material related to the theme of cultural exchange I will base my theoretical framework on the theory of cosmopolitanism and draw on the article “Gap year volunteer tourism Myths of global citizenship?” by Lyons et al. from 2011. The theoretical framework presented in this article provides me with the tool to analyse ideas of contributions to cultural exchange presented by the interviewees. Lyons et al. (2011) presents a theoretical framework based on the ideas of cosmopolitanism in relation to VT, where access to the world and the attraction of new cultural encounters provide the foundation of VT. Lyons et al. (2011) argue that VT stems from a larger global awareness and an incentive which stands in contrast to mass tourism, more cosmopolitan at the core. However, the engagement with other cultures which is essential for global citizenship is not an automatic outcome of tourism.

As globalisation has produced the ideas of global citizenship, which is in turn connected to cosmopolitanism (the celebration of cultural diversity, human rights and concern for the needs of others) it is no wonder that traveling to other cultures, and learn about them, lie at the foundation of cosmopolitan ideology. Traveling for cultural learning may even be the ‘best’ way in order to actively demonstrate cosmopolitan beliefs in global citizenship (Lyons et al. 2011). However, traveling for cultural mutual learning is not the only part of cosmopolitan motivations behind VT, an altruistic phenomenon, linked to the Western society, constitutes the other side to motivations behind VT. Lyons et al. (2011) refer to it as a ‘guilt-conscious’ society, which in combination with financially supporting parents, provides the individual with the *opportunity* to practice their altruism and ambitions of cultural learning. A third part within the

cosmopolitan theoretical framework lies in the motivation of being on an adventure which has strong connections to self-development of the identity of the individual. To volunteer has been conceptualised as an alternative form of experience, a trip which is more than just visiting a place as an ‘outsider’. As a volunteer, the individual will contribute through spending time in the community, an activity that corresponds with the belief in the notion of ‘mutual benefit’ (Lyons et al. 2011).

Despite the actual outcome of VT and the critique towards it, it can be argued that intentions behind VT suggest that a pathway to notions of a global citizenship within a neo-liberal context may exist. Traditional forms of cosmopolitanism suggests for one to interact with other cultures while keeping a level of reflexivity about one’s personal culture (Lyons et al. 2011). However, the neo-liberal addition to cosmopolitanism in the case VT does not require such reflexivity. According to Lyons et al. (2011) there is evidence that volunteers have a stronger motivation of ‘traveling’ than the motivation of ‘contributing’ which indicates that volunteering is a way for young adults to gain cultural capital by collecting experience and knowledge, and though acquiring a ‘well-travelled’ identity.

The components of cultural learning, altruism and identity creation through adventures makes up the three part of VT-cosmopolitanism which will provide me with the tool to analyse my material.

## 4.2 Neo-liberalism and volunteer tourism

My theoretical framework will draw on Wanda Vradi’s book “Volunteer Tourism in the Global South: Giving Back in Neoliberal Times”. Vradi connects VT to the harsh conditions of neo-liberalism and the characteristics of the subject’s (the volunteer’s) positioning and ability to conform to the neo-liberal market (Vradi 2012: 120). Vradi (2012: 132) argues for volunteers being victims of larger socio-economic transformations where they are persistently trying to live up to the requests of the neo-liberal society. Hence this theoretical framework perceives VT as an educational strategy which is designed to enhance the economic vitality and employability of young adults in a quickly accelerating competitive economic climate (Vradi 2012: 87).

The liberalised economic and political development of the previous decades has produced the force for white middle-class individuals to push beyond the achievement of an ‘ordinary’ university education (Vradi 2012: 29). Vradi (2012) argues that the phenomenon of VT is a reflection and a product of our global society. Although Vradi (2012: 53) does argue that volunteers cannot be held directly responsible for the reasons behind VT, she does acknowledge that the moral reasons for volunteering may be problematic, as VT is on the whole is a symptom of wider political and economic transformations.

VT is a result of the fast track society of today where one should gather professions assets, expand your 'human capital' and acquire new knowledge – even when on vacation. It is a product of the neo-liberal injunction to maximise future gain in all temporalities of life (Vrasti 2012:86). Students who volunteer abroad earn a substantial advantage to others in the competition for employment and success (Vrasti 2012: 87). Students who have volunteered stand out as adaptable and mobile workers who are able to perform in a flatter, leaner and more globally integrated world with flexible territorial, professional and linguistic boundaries. This phenomenon has almost become a standard requirement for career development following a university education (Vrasti 2012: 95). VT has become a rite of passage that helps young adults to become responsible, self-enterprising and the resourceful subjects they need to be in order to navigate the unpredictable nature of neo-liberal capital. Vrasti (2012: 50) does however not reduce volunteers to hypocrites who's only motive behind volunteering lies in the personal gain. VT feeds off of people's genuine concern about the void left by the shrinking welfare state and peoples' sincere emotional connection to the disadvantaged community. Therefore, VT should according to Vrasti (2012: 50) be understood in the juncture between neo-liberal state practices and global movements of capital.

Young adults need to complement their in-class education with study-abroad programs, foreign language skills, internships, something which make them stand out from their peers, hence why not a VT experiences (Vrasti 2012). Once again, this provides a reflection of neo-liberal governmentality that makes sure that the social field has the necessary values, attitudes and tastes for a free market economy to operate smoothly (Vrasti 2012: 120). The responsibility for a future employment lies solely upon the shoulders of the individual, which is convenient for a neo-liberal government. VT is a mix of social responsibility and economic rationality which is meant to teach young adults and students how to succeed in a global market economy, and how to govern themselves as well as others in the absence of targeted government spending and intervention (Vrasti 2012: 121). VT may not weigh as heavy as higher education does but it does provide the individuals with priceless competences like motivations, teamwork, self-confidence, self-reliance and leadership skills in combination with a sense of political and civic responsibility.

This theoretical framework is based on the notion that VT is a product of a neo-liberal society in which young adults and students require unique and self-developing experiences in order to stand out in the global society. The free market has led to a deterioration of social welfare, and the security of an employment after a university education no longer exists.

The next section will outline the theoretical framework that I will use in order to analyse the data which is related to educational aspects of the interviewees' answers.



### 4.3 Education and volunteer tourism

Recently, *work-integrated learning practica*, or work-study programs, have become increasingly important within international development studies programs around Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand (Rosser 2012, Epprecht 2004).<sup>2</sup> This development show that there is a strong demand for the inclusion of practical knowledge within development studies programs, and an increasing evidence for experimental education enhances a student's future career prospects as well as host organizations and universities may enjoy a variety of benefits (Rosser 2012). There are obvious connections between the work-study programs within development studies programs and VT, as the experiences gained from the two are very similar (Rosser 2012). As with VT, work-study programs give students the opportunity to apply theoretical skills developed in classrooms into practice.

What becomes evident is that practical knowledge from the experiences of these work-study programs is immensely valuable for development students, and the concern for ethics and pedagogy required for reflection and analysis remains fairly absent (Epprecht 2011). Despite the good intentions, humanist, liberal and anti-colonialist ethics and the high ideals that undergraduate students educated in elite institutions in the Global North represents, the work-study programs poses a risk of being perceived as or being in fact neo-colonial (Epprecht 2011).

According to Kassam (2010), the purpose of development studies is concise but also challenging as its aim is to educate students to combine characteristics of rigour with relevance, research with practice and passion with analysis. Kassam (2010) argue that there are four key indications for the importance of learning-by-doing: (1) it has deepening effect of students' theoretical understanding of the field through practical work, (2) it is challenging to students as it forces them to reflect upon the relationship between their education and their values, (3) it makes them aware of the responsibilities related to their education and its connection to civic mindedness, and (4) nurturing a healthy respect for socio-cultural diversity. To gain practical experience is essential for the demanding process of transformation from knowing *that*, into learning *how*, and this process is unlikely to take place in a classroom (Kassam 2010).

The advantages for students engaging in work-study programs, as well as in VT experiences, are explicit. The gains of the host are however more ambiguous. Research indicates that students often spend too little time in the host communities to actually make a sustainable impact, (Rosser 2012, Epprecht 2011). Host community project managers have stressed their concern about work-

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<sup>2</sup> For examples of types of work-study programs see Rosser (2012), Epprecht (2011), Kassam (2010) and Nelles (2011).

study programs being too short to get any real value from the interns (Rosser 2012). Most work-study programs range from lasting a couple of weeks to about a few months, but for a period abroad to be sufficient to have meaningful outcome it should not last less than six months (Epprecht 2011). Despite students' theoretical knowledge, another constraint for work-study programs is that the students often lack of adequate preparations of for example language skills (Epprecht 2011).

Although work-study programs as well as VT initiatives are well intended, they may have unanticipated harmful effects (Epprecht 2011). Experimental learning such as work-study programs or its equivalence, VT, may even betray key principles of development studies ethics, and in fact contribute to the very kinds of colonial style relations and underdevelopment that they are intended to critically address (Epprecht 2011).

The strength of the field of international development studies is that it holds a well-deserved reputation for sharp and at times uncompromising critique, which may unfortunately have a discouraging effect on students. The strength of practical experience (work-study programs or VT) may then be to offer a refreshing change from the pessimism of classroom theorization in development studies. Practical experience might however significantly contribute to the problem of depriving students from their optimism for development instead (Epprecht 2011). Epprecht (2011: 700) stresses the concern for development students "who take the critiques of capitalism and liberal democracy so much to heart that they move from a healthy scepticism about development to an unhealthy anger or to politically immobilizing apathy" as they experience development work in the field. According to Epprecht (2011) it is unethical to leave students without a structured, formal opportunity to honestly analyse the implementation of theoretical knowledge into practical work. If these issues are not addressed, work-study programs may backfire in learning terms.

This theoretical framework offers a tool to analyse the material which deals with the subject of theoretical knowledge and practical skills and how students attitudes and approaches to VT and development changes with both theoretical skills and practical skills. This theory drawing from the work of Epprecht (2011), Kassam (2010) and Rosser (2012) perceives practical knowledge within the field of development studies a key factor to combine with theoretical knowledge for students to be fully prepared for their future within the field development. Even though practical knowledge is well-intended, it poses a risk of harming the host community and depriving the students of their optimism within development, if students are not educated about the honest struggles encountered when combining theoretical knowledge with practical skills.

## 5 Material and Analysis

To analyse the data from my focus groups, I transcribed the recordings and coded the material in search of recurring themes. One central theme that I discovered was the theme of (1) cultural exchange that students have experienced with people in their host communities. The second theme I detected was related to (2) the career in the neo-liberal global society, and another central theme I distinguished related to (3) retrospective critique that students directed to VT.

I will apply the theory of cosmopolitanism and VT to the first theme, the theory of neo-liberalism and VT to the second theme, and the theory of education and VT to the third theme.

### 5.1 Cultural exchange

The students discussed what *real* effect their volunteer stay had, and almost all of them were resentful to if they actually contributed to anything substantial that would benefit the people of the community in the long-term. All of the students did however feel as though they did contribute to a cultural exchange and that interacting with local people was a very positive factor in their volunteer trip. The following quote is representative of this shared feeling where the expectations of the volunteer stay did not conform to the actual performance during the stay.

“I did not save the world. I think yes, [I did contribute] because I made friends, and you contribute to your friends no matter where you make them. [...] I influenced them like I would influence any other person that I meet in my life. So yes, but not because I was in Cambodia and volunteered, it’s just because I made friends.” (Student 5, may 8<sup>th</sup> 2014).

Drawing from this quote, it could indicate that this student is in fact influenced by a cosmopolitan mentality where cultural mutual learning is highly valued and is beneficial to all participants. The student also indicated that he/she had very high expectations on his/her volunteer trip and that they were not met. The student was strongly motivated by altruism before volunteering, which would connect to Lyons et al. (2011) notion of a ‘guilt-conscious’ society, but in this student’s case, their guilt was not ‘relieved’ as the expectations of making a difference was not made into reality. This will in turn reflect upon the students’ creation of identity by volunteering in the global south. This student’s bitterness about the outcome of his/hers volunteer stay may be a result of his/her lack of contribution to the

creation of identity and self-development. The volunteer-identity is created on the notions of a 'do-gooder' and an adventure seeker, and if they are not fully met, the glorified volunteer identity is harmed. Hence, the student's reflection upon volunteer tourism becomes slightly bitter as they did not live up to their view of *themselves* through what they thought they were able to *do*.

Within cosmopolitan theory, the idea of global citizenship is central. The idea of mutual learning and responsibility through being part of a global community is fundamental. When the contribution of the students' work in the local community was discussed, many of the students mentioned their contribution of *influencing* the locals, and *being influenced* themselves by the locals. The quote below represents a common stance of the students', where cultural learning through global citizenship and neo-liberalism is evident.

"So I think this global aspect... I don't think it was *me*, but I think it was the whole of having foreigners around you... The same like, when we now in BIDS have all of us together, you know that "Okay, the world is open, you can go if you want to". So they got this perspective they might have not gotten if only surrounded by locals." (Student 5, may 8<sup>th</sup> 2014).

When the students discussed their contribution to development, many were hesitant to whether they actually contributed to development in some form. Almost all of them however perceived this cultural exchange as something they actually contributed with. And although they expressed critique to their own role as a volunteer tourist, they did justify their volunteer initiative with their contributions to cultural exchange, where they contributed with new ideas and views on the world to the locals, and they were themselves offered the locals' views on the world which therefore made their volunteer trip worthwhile.

This perception of the students may be explained by the neo-liberal addition to cosmopolitanism. Students may initially be motivated by altruism and the idea of contribution and 'giving back'. But ultimately is the idea of travelling and meeting new cultures what becomes central when reflected upon. The idea that cultural knowledge will make everything possible, and that locals' who previously lacked this knowledge were through the students visit enlighten about this information. An important factor was that it was them, *the student*, who opened up for this message of an enabling global cultural knowledge. This does in turn add to the students' self-image and their acquiring of cultural knowledge through a well-travelled identity.

Many of the students discussed around the notion of collectiveness which can be found within cosmopolitanism where all are united through diversity. There is however also a notion of neo-liberal individualism where it is up to you to go out there in the world to gain cultural experience. It is on you as an individual to go abroad, and learn about global cultures and in turn contribute to a global cultural understanding. One could therefore argue that this connected to the central idea of

VT, building cultural links through global citizenship, which in turn *produces* and *becomes a product* of the cosmopolitan notion of a culturally experienced identity.

## 5.2 Career-aspects in the neo-liberal global society

This section will discuss the theme on aspects of a future career which was a central theme to especially the second focus groups. I will discuss the students responses related to notions of *a career* and explain their responses through Wanda Vradi's (2012) theory of VT and the neo-liberal society.

Some of the students discussed how volunteering, no matter the impact on the host community, is a smart choice for their own future academic and professional career. Nearly all of the students agreed upon that their contribution to development through volunteering was questionable and that they gained more than what they contributed with. The students were all critical to the fast development of volunteer NGOs in the global south. When the students were asked why they then think that VT really exists, nearly all of them agreed upon that volunteering offers some concrete benefits, both to the young people volunteering and to the local and global VT facilitators (global and regional VT agencies and local VT NGOs) that have created a business out of volunteering. The students discussed how volunteering on the one side gives students attractive qualities for a future career within the field of development, as volunteering provides you with the working experiences that are necessary for future jobs. Volunteering was according to some students also a good option if you were lost in life and needed to find yourself.

The students discussed how they on the other side have experienced VT NGOs in where the local employees were more interested in the money that foreigners brought in order to volunteer, than the actual purpose of the NGO. Some students described the development of the VT industry as a lucrative business without genuine motivation from the NGO-owners' side. The following quote is from a student who was critical to how people volunteer/have a VT business, for the 'wrong' purposes.

“I feel that in certain study programs of this description it's like “Oh at least you have to have lived half a year in a foreign country”. And obviously volunteering looks always so amazing on your CV. And also I think a lot of people are just doing it just to make their CV look better, and also [...], if you're lost, it's really good to get out of your own environment and do something else and then “hmm can I travel? Could I also volunteer?” so it's an option to run away, to find yourself, to challenge yourself. You know people do it, and other people makes business you of it.” (Student 5, may 8<sup>th</sup> 2014).

This student recognizes that volunteering is not only the product of altruism and the desire to contribute. Within this discussion the student sees volunteering as a smart choice for people who may be lost in life and perhaps wants to travel. In connection to Vrasti's theory, the neo-liberal society is constructed in that way that every act should have a purpose. Hence, to *only* travel is unwise as travelling *and* volunteering will develop one's professional skills in such direction that it becomes essential in a future career. This statement conforms with Vrasti's idea of the fast track society where neo-liberal socio-economic conditions force individuals to perceive all activities as an investment for the future, where individuals should gather professional assets and expand on human capital – even when travelling (Vrasti 2012, 86). The neo-liberal society has created a system where 'being lost in your early twenties' is no longer accepted, not if you do not disguise it with the smart career choice of volunteering, instead of 'only' travelling. And volunteering really is a smart career choice, as many of the students felt that they need to have had some sort of experience from working with development in a developing country to have a chance on getting a job in the future. VT has become the product of the neo-liberal socio-economic development (Vrasti 2012), where individuals need to be innovative and find alternative ways into the job market. The message that the neo-liberal society sends to young people is that if they want to have a chance in the future job market they better make themselves as attractive as possible, as it is no longer sufficient with a university degree to get a job, the students need to have had a job already and gotten additional skills to get a job after completed studies. The same applies to development and ending poverty. The neo-liberal global governmentality has by *not* ending poverty forced young people into feeling as though they need to do something themselves, that individuals must themselves help the developing world. This does of course suit neo-liberal governmentality as development then also becomes market-led. Development has become a market, and VT is a part of that market. The demand individuals have for ending poverty has been met by the supply of VT facilitators (VT agencies and NGOs) to offer individuals to help out in the global south.

When discussing how volunteering affected the students, many of them came to the conclusion that volunteering had a great impact on them. Some students felt that it is because of their volunteer trip that they are now studying BIDS.

“[...] when I came back I knew what I wanted to study, so that actually changed my whole plan of what I wanted to work with and what I wanted to become and be, so... Yes, it changed my perspective and my career... Everything actually.” (Student 7, may 8<sup>th</sup> 2014).

This quote is perhaps in indication of how the neo-liberal global society has forced individuals to find their path in life at a higher speed than previously. How individuals are pushed into finding their passion as VT has almost become a rite

of passage that produces young individuals to become the responsible, resourceful, self-enterprising subjects who fit into the fast track society of today. One could argue for this being the positive side to the neo-liberal idea of VT, that young individuals are encouraged to actively find their interest and pursue it. That might however be a distortion of the truth since all young individuals do not have the possibility to ‘find their passion’ through VT. Most volunteers are white middle-class individuals who are privileged enough to be able to engage in VT (Vrasti 2012: 29). Hence, not all individuals have the possibility to volunteer, only the already privileged once. Therefore VT becomes another factor which is increasing inequality, inequality in the west and globally.

The clear connection the students make in between VT and requirement from future educations and jobs point to volunteering being as very wise career choice for young individuals who wishes to pursue a career within the field of development, or who are lost in life and wishes to become inspired.

### 5.3 Retrospective critique

This section will discuss the theme of ‘retrospective critique’ which was a fundamental theme during the focus groups. In order to understand this material I will apply the theoretical framework of Epprecht (2011), Rosser (2012) and Kassam (2010) who discuss the significant advantages of combining theoretical knowledge with practical knowledge and how this process is key for students within development studies to fully understand the field of development.

When the volunteers discussed how their view on VT has changed after studying BIDS, many of them established that their perception on VT in general and their perception on their own volunteer trip in particular, had changed after studying BIDS. The students expressed sharp critique to their own role as unskilled volunteers.

“So when I had started BIDS I became a bit more critical to the whole volunteering situation. I think that you can absolutely do it but that you have to do it with a large bit of consideration and critical post-colonial thinking. Like sort of situate yourself in that context and say “why should I be the one to do this?” “Do I have the right to go here?” Maybe it will do more harm than good, and is this... Even if it is more for my personal gain than what I contribute with.” (Student 2, may 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014).

This quote represents how students to a large extent felt that BIDS gave them a deeper understanding of what they actually *did* as volunteers. BIDS gave the students the tools to understand volunteering from a historical and political level, and as the theory suggests, students need both theoretical knowledge and practical

experience to ‘fully’ comprehend development processes. This shows how volunteering gave the student considerable advantages for future work within development, to not only know *that*, but learning *how* development works.

Many of the students expressed extensive self-critique that was largely connected to theories on neo-colonialism which indicated that students have advanced in their mind-set by studying BIDS, which is another indication that to fully understand development, students cannot only receive the theoretical side or the practical side of the field of development Epprecht (2011). The critique that the students expressed was mainly connected to how they felt that they lacked sufficient language skills, pedagogical skills and time, to actually contribute with something during their stay. The students expressed great frustration about being unable to contribute with something substantial during their stay, and as they connected this to their theoretical knowledge on neo-colonialism and westernization some of the student’s attitudes were quite pessimistic. One student even expressed resentment and doubt towards the field of development as such. According to Epprecht (2011), practical work may work is to provide a change from pessimistic class-room theorization, and some students expressed this pessimism towards development despite practical experiences. Epprecht (2011) explains this by the lack of a sufficient education of students *on how to combine and analyse* theoretical knowledge and practical experiences.

As the purpose of development studies is to leave students *critical* of different approaches to development one could argue that BIDS students reflect back on VT with a lot of insightful and well-argued critique. Some students are however also quite critical to development in general, something that is perhaps not the intended outcome of BIDS. The purpose of BIDS is perhaps not to leave students doubtful about development, rather the opposite, but some students however, interpret development in general with great pessimism and cynicism.

The general perception of VT by the students is however insightful and students express different positive and negative perspectives of VT. Even though many students agree on that VT needs to be criticised, many of them see positive aspects of the cultural exchange within VT. In the quote below, a student is discussing how his/her perception of VT was before studying BIDS, and how it has changed after studying BIDS.

“So it’s like okay, they can maybe develop in their own way, why does development have to be the “western development”. [...] you were shocked at how they managed things, but at the same time it can be their way of managing things. Our way is not the right way, and why should that be ... This intention of going there, learning *them* something there ... I think that a lot of times we can go there and learn more from them. Especially when it comes to for example, sustainable development. [...] Our way is not always the right way. BIDS have made me think in that direction.” (Student 1, may 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014).



Students address many advantages of their volunteering which correspond with Kassam's (2010) four key indications for the importance of learning-by-doing.<sup>3</sup> The quote above is an example of an insightful reflection of a student who has found a healthy reflection of his/her volunteer experience, and who has been able to connect the practical knowledge with the theoretical knowledge from BIDS. Even though many of the students had experienced issues with their volunteer stay and were very critical towards whether volunteer tourism really contributes to development, many of them did however admit that it gave them a way to see the connection between their theoretical knowledge and practical skills in a way that would have been difficult to achieve otherwise. Also, volunteering made many of the students learn a lot about *themselves*, as many experienced volunteering as a *challenging* experience where they became aware of what the structural and societal differences between the Global North and South actually means in practice. A third example of Kassam's (2010) key principles is how many of the students also reflected on how volunteering had made them aware of their role in development and their positioning within development, being a western actor. In the quote above, the student discussed how he/she after volunteering critiqued western development for being perceived as 'the only' way towards development, through this the student demonstrated how he/she became aware of his/her western civic mindedness and how it then changed, or was perhaps altered, with the combination of volunteering and BIDS.

When it comes to the fourth of Kassam's (2010) indications of the importance of learning-by-doing (nurturing a healthy respect for socio-cultural diversity), the students expressed a variety of reflection on their volunteer trip. Many of the students however, reflected upon tendencies to a complex and at times challenging relationship between them and the locals.

"During our time we met really nice people in our own age and... But it was very hard to know what they were after kind of [after]... Because, unfortunately you had to, or it felt like you had to, or that they were fooling you or wanted money and stuff like that so it was hard to trust the people... That was not from the organization." (Student 1, may 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014).

Some of the students expressed that they had a hard time integrating with the locals, that they tried to make friends but they felt that it was difficult to trust the locals as the locals acted in ways that the students were unaccustomed to. This ties in to Epprecht's critique of students spending too little time in the field which becomes a constraint to the outcome of their trip and thus creating unanticipated harmful effects. Analysing this from a neo-colonial perspective, one could argue that students retrieve into colonial roles as they feel hesitant to integration. Although VT is well intended, some students described how they even contributed

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<sup>3</sup> See page 14 (above) for Kassam's (2010) four key indications for the importance of learning-by-doing.

to the segregation of black and white people by not getting out of their comfort zone and interacting with local people in their spare time. Some of the students described how they would only socialize with other westerners in their spare time. For some of the students it was due to feeling suspicious of the locals' intention, and for some students it was due feeling socially elevated and in a sense worshiped by the locals.

“[...] I really struggled with this that they treat you as someone who is up here when I'm like... Not. That's something that I struggled with when I was there, that people see you as someone that's more than them, but I'm not so... [...] I don't know, they just treat you as kings. [...] Because they were kind of ... Honoured that we were there... For some reason.” (Student 3, may 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014).

One could discern neo-colonial underlying structures behind this quote, as well as from the quote before the one above this one. Drawing from the theory of Epprecht (2010), one could argue that this is due to the limited amount of time that volunteers spend on the host community. The students were themselves very critical of themselves in this regard as many were regretful of the way they handled the situation of integration. The students did also express powerlessness in the sense that they did not have the tools to handle the situation either. Drawing on Epprecht (2010) what is currently missing in development studies curricula is education on how to analyse and interpret the implementation of theoretical knowledge into practical work. One might discern a connection between the students' lack of tools to handle the integration issue, and lack of education on the topic. This is however ambiguous as a majority of the students volunteered before they began studying BIDS. This might apply to the students who volunteered while being enrolled in the BIDS program, but it is still uncertain to conclude this. What becomes evident is that students in general show insightful reflections on their volunteer experiences. As most students express how their view on their volunteer trip has changed by studying BIDS. Many of the students connect their volunteer trip to various critical development theories such as neo-colonialism and dependency theory and they give the impression to have devoted some time to reflect upon their volunteer trip and many of them indicate to have taken a step back from their own personal experiences and have reflected on VT as an actor within development.

“I think to go on volunteer tourism, [...] you need a huge measurement of critical thinking, I think. And reflect on yourself. I think it's really easy to also start exoticizing like “Oh they have so wonderfully coloured dresses!” or like “Yeah, I lived in an *indigenous* family, yeah they have such an interesting and fascinating culture!”. You make a huge us and them situation, where you look at their culture and don't also see that you have a culture that you reflect on. So after BIDS I'm also critical to development in general. Because I think that there has been so much harm done.” (Student 2, may 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014).

As in this quote, students express concern and critique towards VT and they reflect on VT as a critical action when one needs to be cautious on one's reactions and one's own civic mindedness when volunteering.

This student also reflects on how his/her perception on volunteering has transformed by studying BIDS. Many of the students draw on post-colonial critique to explain VT, they also express a large amount of critique towards themselves and their role within development. Some of them, as in this case above, also express a rather pessimistic reflection on development in general as they reflect on the negative aspects of development and emphasise the amount of harm that has been done.

Lastly, students of BIDS who participated in this study reflect back on VT with insightful post-colonial critique, both towards themselves and towards the concept of VT as it according to the majority them is doubtful whether VT actually contributes to development, it might in some cases only have negative effects. In this sense, the BIDS education has provided students with tools to analyse *the volunteer* as an actor within the field of development.

Some students do however reflect on their VT experiences, as well as on *development in general*, with pessimism and negativity. This might indicate that drawing on their practical experiences, their honest attitude towards VT is negative and that VT is in fact a mainly negative business for development. One could possibly draw connections to a lack of education within BIDS to provide students with tool to honestly analyse the implementation of theoretical knowledge into practical work, this argument does however require further research.

## 6 Conclusion

This research has revealed that in retrospect, a majority of the students did not feel as though they contributed to development in their host community. All of them did however agree on that they did contribute to a cultural exchange in the host community. That despite the failure of their initial purpose of volunteering, they did contribute to a mutual cultural exchange that benefitted both the locals and themselves. The students perceived this outcome as valuable for both parties, which can be connected to the theory of cosmopolitanism where cultural learning is achieved through a global citizenship where collectiveness through diversity is celebrated.

Students did also reflect on how volunteering in the Global South was a wise decision for increasing their chances of a successful career. Many of the students reflected on the extent to which it was a great benefit to themselves to volunteer, perhaps more of a benefit than they wanted to admit to themselves before volunteering. Within this theme students reflect back on VT with honesty as they realised that volunteering for selfish reasons was a greater part of the reason behind volunteering. The neo-liberal society does however force students to stand out if they wish to pursue a successful career within the field of, in this case, development.

In review, the students felt as though their perception on VT had changed to a great extent by studying BIDS as they now were critical to their role as unskilled western middle-class volunteers. Many of the students expressed insightful post-colonial critique and reflected back on their volunteer trip with scepticism as they felt as though they had had naïve expectations and perceptions of development during their volunteer stay. Drawing from this, the BIDS program is successful in educating its students to become reflexive and critical to different types of development, in this case VT. Some of the students however expressed how they had become sceptical to *development in general* after volunteering and studying BIDS. This indicates a failure within the BIDS program where some students develop an unhealthy pessimism about development instead of developing a sense of healthy critical thinking towards the development discourse. Drawing on this study, a suggestion to the BIDS program may therefore be to include pedagogical education on how to analyse and interpret practical experiences. This, in order to prevent a development of reproduction of neo-colonial roles and pessimism towards the field of development.

A suggestion for further research is to study whether the finding of this study is generalizable, thus conducting longitudinal mixed methods research would be appropriate.

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## Appendix A: Volunteer specifics

<b>Student</b>	<b>Year of BIDS</b>	<b>Volunteer Country</b>	<b>Type of volunteering</b>	<b>Duration</b>	<b>Volunteer-activity</b>	<b>When student volunteered</b>
Student 1 (focus group 1)	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Tanzania	Through a local NGO which the student contacted.	4 weeks.	English teacher for 4-6 year old kids and daycare center.	In between the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of BIDS.
Student 2 (focus group 1)	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Ecuador	Government funded volunteering in a local NGO which was part of a larger international umbrella org.	2 months.	Held gender equality workshops, English teacher and sexual health teacher.	Before studying BIDS.
Student 3 (focus group 1)	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Kenya	Through a Swedish organization which sent the student to a local NGO.	10 weeks.	Teaching women computer science, English and health education.	Before studying BIDS.
Student4 (focus group 1)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Kenya	Through a German association which sent the student to a local NGO.	3 months.	Teaching guitar skills, various work-shop activities.	Before studying BIDS.
Student 5 (focus group 2)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Cambodia	Government funded volunteering in a local NGO.	12 moths.	Administrative office work, work-shops with local university students.	Before studying BIDS.

Student 6 (focus group 2)	1 <sup>st</sup>	Ecuador	Government funded volunteering in a local NGO.	11 months.	English teacher at a primary school.	Before studying BIDS.
Student 7 (focus group 2)	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Cambodia	Through a VT agency (Projects Abroad), placed in a local NGO.	3 months.	After school center for children, various workshops.	Before studying BIDS.
Student 8 (focus group 2)	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Ghana	Twice through a VT agency (Volunteer Services Overseas), twice through a local NGO which the student contacted.	4-6 weeks.	English teacher at a primary school, after school center teaching art, administrative office work.	Before and during studying BIDS.
Student 9 (focus group 2)	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Tanzania	Through a local NGO which the student contacted.	4 weeks.	English teacher in a nursery school, assisting at a retention center/juvenile prison, assisting in an after school center for children.	In between the 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> year of BIDS.



## Appendix B: Central Themes

Student	Cultural Exchange	Career-aspects	Retrospective critique
1	“It’s a good experience to go there, learn a lot about yourself, but maybe not call it volunteering and helping, maybe as you said before to call it cultural exchange instead to learn more about yourself and about others.”	“[I]learned a lot about myself and how it can be in other cultures and how I should react when I meet with other cultures or that culture. But I don’t really know what they [gained].”	“So I think that how it’s [VT] affected me to see it in a ... institutions and people in a different way, to maybe have another acceptance when I meet new people and not to judge right away.”
2	“In the schools [...] the kids were used to sometimes there comes a weird westerner and says something and they listened [...] But I don’t think it was a big deal that we were there. It was... Almost everyone we met were nice, and they had a nice... yeah, relationship.”	“I think I also gained more than I contributed. Like I said before, the English, I mean one of the classes there were five-year olds, and that was the first time that they had had English classes. So I know that they learned to count to ten and that they learned three new colours but yeah, it was also mainly that they had some fun and maybe learned a little bit.”	“When I was travelling in Peru, just after, I was like ‘Yeah, I’m gonna start BIDS, then I’m gonna work for the UN in like Latin America with women’s issues!’ and I was really motivated. But then I think partly when I got to like sort of digest what or how it had been... So when I had started BIDS I became a bit more critical to the whole volunteering situation.”
3	“So I think that in a way they are curious of our culture and they want to learn more about Sweden.”	“I definitely think that I gained more than I contributed with.”	“It [VT] was kind of the reason why I applied for BIDS because it was like an eye opener to these issues and... But yeah, as you go along with BIDS you get more critical.”
4	“We were part of the segregation in a way, but we also did something with the local people and went to their homes and a wedding.”	“I think also I gained more than I contributed with. [...]I think they [the locals] gain also more than they contributed.”	“I mean the [VT] industry or however you wanna call it isn’t there to help. It’s there for a holiday thing. In a way. Or of course not all organizations. That also doesn’t mean that the people, the local people can’t gain from it or so, but still I think that the priority of the money inside it is to please the people from Europe or wherever they come from.”
5	“Like one of my students was actually two weeks before my departure like ‘you’re going to Sweden right? Me too,	“I think we all in BIDS know that we’ve been to another country where we will actually work will always look good on our CV. Like I did not	“I mean like It’s good to just like see how a project could look like, how the organization is built and to reflect on your role and also just see like that it’s not

	look I'm gonna apply' and like gave me a flyer of the global scholarship and he's gonna apply for it next year when he's done with his bachelor's he's gonna apply for the global scholarship to study in Sweden. So I think this global aspect... I don't think it was <i>me</i> , but I think it was the whole of having foreigners around you..."	do it because of this reason, yes it was a plus, and I liked that I did it, it looks great on my CV. But it was for me also a runaway option. I didn't know what to study. I wanted to see if I could do it. And so... It's scary how... your need it by now to have lived in a different country."	an easy fix, like go there and everything will be okay. Or that you see it's so much more complicated."
6	"Personally I feel like I didn't... I felt like super well prepared [before going], but then I felt like personally I should have maybe [...] concerning my country, Ecuador, I should have read more..."	- (Student had to leave after 50 minutes into the interview and did not discuss this theme).	"Like at the end, most of the kid we like from background with families who were like... socio-economic difficulties, so it was kind of difficult to work with them. Attentionwise and stuff. I mean with time you figure out you own method and how to deal with them. But when I look back I think I feel like I disproportionately learned more than them. I learned so much this year. I don't know if they learned so much from me actually."
7	"I think that it's more becoming... A way for us to brag about ourselves and what we do for <i>good</i> ... But at the same time I think we shouldn't... I mean all of us here did it for a reason, because we wanted to help, and even if there was some selfish reasons as well, but I think that's okay as long as the intention is to help and you do something good."	"When I came back I knew what I wanted to study, so that actually changed my whole plan of what I wanted to work with and what I wanted to become and be, so... Yes, it changed my perspective and my career... Everything actually."	"I think that my experience from my project is that we actually <i>do</i> an impact. A really big one. And of course, it's small scale but it's grown a lot. And when I was there in 2009 we had around 180 kids in total and now they have I think... almost 400... and it's just five years later. [...] It's not a business. It's not. I cannot explain more than it's actually a pretty genuine thing there."
8	I think it was a good collaboration [between volunteers and locals], but I think you could as soon as they [the volunteers] got there, the teacher of the class would just sit down and let them do it. And instead of doing it together it was kind of like 'Oh, I'll take a break, now someone else is here'. I think they're used	- (Student did not discuss this theme).	"I think development studies has at least made me realize the effect that I would have on the recipient country. Not only thinking... Like you realize the consequences, or even the positives, anything, that happens within that country when you go. You're more aware on how you will affect the environment..."

	to a lot of other people coming in all the time and I don't think that is good that there is always new people coming in. [...] SO there was not good communication between the volunteers and the real teachers.”		
9	“It's [VT] kind of like an adventure trip. For people, and it's taking tourism to the next level because they want to go to a cool country, maybe see some orphans, and help them out or maybe play with them and take cute pictures.”	“Yeah, I think like, you realize that it's not just an isolated issue that you can work with because it's all connected, or you could work with it, but it's like so many... Like the problems are at all structural so it's all interconnected. So I think in general it's just... I think it's helpful to go on one of these volunteer tourism trips if you want to work with it. Like for yourself I mean.”	“I think you're just more critical in general after you read like... After you've been a BIDS student. And then I think it's more like... I've been kind of questioning you own role in the whole thing or like, if you kind of think a bit neo-colonial, are you the one to... Are you supposed to go there as the saviour with the money and the solutions and it that like the right path to take [...].”

## Appendix C: Interview Guides

Interview question guide for BIDS students

FU: Possible follow up suggestions.

1. What were your initial reasons for going volunteering and what did you expect before going?
2. Did you prepare yourself before going volunteering?
3. What type of project did you participate in?
4. Did you come across any challenges during volunteering?  
FU: How did you handle them?  
Were you faced with any socio-economic challenges?
5. How did you perceive the collaboration in between you as the volunteer and the local population?  
FU: To what extent were the local population involved in your project?
6. What was your relationship to the other volunteers?
7. Do you feel as though you contributed with something during your volunteering?  
FU: If yes, what?  
How do you think your contribution is managed nowadays?  
Was it sustainable?
8. How did you spend your free time during your volunteer stay and did you travel?  
FU: Did you travel within the region, within the country or outside the country?  
How did you arrange this?
9. How did volunteering initially affect you after completing your volunteer trip and when you returned home?
10. How did volunteering affect you in the long run?  
FU: Did it affect your choice of study? Did it affect your perception of poverty? Of development? Other people? The world?
11. How do you perceive the *concept of volunteer tourism* and the global volunteering industry today?  
FU: How has the general attitude of VT in the Global South changed since you volunteered?
12. In retrospect, has your view on volunteer tourism changed after studying development studies?  
FU: In relation to gaining knowledge on the challenges within development?

## Appendix D: Example of courses within BIDS

UTVC11 Development Studies, Development in a Historical Perspective – Economic, Social and Political Transformation:

According to the Lund University home page, this course is an introduction to development studies and puts current development issues in a historical light. The course gives a retro-perspective overview of the development process. It discusses and analyses causes of development and underdevelopment from an economic, geographical, political and social point-of-view in a historical context. Emphasis is on the developing world but, given the dominance of the western powers through colonialism, a more global approach is taken. The course offers an introduction to more contemporary issues in the economic, social and political transformations of the developing world since the 1950s. In addition, this course reviews more recent debates such as the environment, democracy, human rights, empowerment and equal opportunities.

Lund University's webpage on courses and programs of Development Studies, "Utvecklingsstudier: Utveckling I ett historiskt perspektiv – den ekonomiska, politiska och sociala transon, 15.0 hp". [Electronic resource] Available: <http://www.lu.se/lubas/i-uoh-lu-UTVC11> Download date: 2014 – 05 – 27

### **UTVC12 Development Studies, Development in Practice:**

This course gives an introduction to theories of development. As a consequence, throughout the course, in order to properly understand the development processes discussed, a theoretical overview is given.

Lund University's webpage on courses and programs of Development Studies, "Utvecklingsstudier I praktiken, 15.0 hp". [Electronic resource] Available: <http://www.lu.se/lubas/i-uoh-lu-UTVC12> Download date: 2014 – 05 – 27

### **UTVC13 Development Studies, Development Theories:**

This course presents an overview of the dominant theories of economic and socio-political development used in the social sciences since the 1950s with consideration also of their policy impacts. Of special interest are the theories that explicitly address the questions why some nations have managed to develop while others have not. Similarly, theories that try to capture the reasons behind persistence of large income gaps between and within nations and how this affects possibilities for development in an age of increasing global integration will be of special concern. The second part of the course will offer a thorough elaboration of how contemporary challenges for development are approached theoretically by leading scholars in the field. The role of agriculture, connection between growth, poverty and equity, the role of institutions, international trade and foreign aid will be of central importance. Of special significance is how perspectives on hindrances, possibilities and outcomes of development have varied over time and how theories have adapted to changing circumstances.

Lund University's webpage on courses and programs of Development Studies, "Utvecklingsstudier: Utvecklingsteorier, 15 hp". [Electronic resource] Available: <http://www.lu.se/lubas/i-uoh-lu-UTVC13> Download date: 2014 – 05 – 27

## UTVC15 Development Studies, Development Cooperation in Practice:

This course aims to give the student basic knowledge and understanding of the development process. The course puts current discourses on development assistance in a historical and contemporary light.

Lund University's webpage on courses and programs of Development Studies, "Utvecklingsstudier: Utvecklingssamarbete i praktiken, 15 hp". [Electronic resource] Available: <http://www.lu.se/lubas/i-uoh-lu-UTVC15> Download date: 2014 – 05 – 27