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Towards a sustainable change in the field of organised, international volunteering

An exploratory study of experiences and reflections from the Danish field of organised, international volunteering

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Abstract

This study explores the experiences and learning processes within the Danish field of organised, international volunteering. The study takes its empirical departure in two Danish international volunteer programmes and a Danish association working for sustainable change in the market for international volunteering. The organisations' practice, experiences and changes of practice empirically explored in this study is linked to an increasing criticism towards the practice and phenomenon of international volunteering, as well as a noticeable increasing global interest in (social) sustainability. The study is built upon a theoretical framework that combines critical perspectives from post-development theory with experiential learning theory. The former has been applied to explore the power structures embedded in the field of international volunteering. The latter has been applied as an analytical tool to explore how experience and knowledge relates to the organisations' change of practice. This analysis further unfolds some of the organisations' challenges, being travel agencies in a competitive market driven by the demands and requests of 'customers', while the organisations simultaneously have to assure their credibility as humanitarian organisations. The particular combination of theory has contributed to an analytical debate of structure and agency, power and knowledge.

Keywords: International volunteering, organisations' change of practice, social sustainability, post-development, experiential learning, structure, agency, power, knowledge

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1.0 Research Field & Literature Review

In this paragraph, we introduce the field of research and provide an overview of the existing literature in the field. First, we introduce the empirical phenomenon of international volunteering and second, how it has been conceptualised through previous academic studies. We identify a gap in the existing literature: Both as a phenomenon and a practice, international volunteering is increasingly criticised for its (reproduction of global inequality through means of considering the Global North superior and the Global South inferior). However, non-governmental organisations that offer these international volunteer programmes are increasingly recognising and reacting to this criticism. In this study, these organisations are considered to be in a learning process. As such, this study explores a continuous change in the field of organised, international volunteering.

Our study regards the global phenomenon of international volunteering organised by non-governmental, humanitarian organisations working with(in) the development sector. International volunteering commonly involves individuals or groups, most often youths from the Global North, who spend an amount of time doing voluntary work at various organisational or institutional partner projects, primarily located in the Global South, and often as a part of a global development policy. These partner projects can for example be within humanitarian areas at schools, orphanages, health clinics etc.; in eco/environmental areas such as animal care at sanctuaries, protecting natural habitats and its animal/fauna life; within construction - helping to build or rebuild orphanages, schools, public or private administrative buildings etc.; or within areas that are more knowledge and/or advocacy oriented; e.g. religious, political or human rights based projects. The varieties of volunteer work are numerous and widespread. What all of these different projects have in common is the aspect regarding individuals from the Global North spending money and time, travelling to the Global South with the motivation and wish to 'help', which will throughout this study be referred to as an altruism of 'doing good' for someone or something else. The fact that the volunteers are most often travelling from high-income countries to low-income countries, and further that the programmes are often sold as 'alternative travelling'[1] or 'intercultural experiences' makes critics refer to the phenomenon as volunteer tourism or *voluntourism*. (Wearing 2001)

[1] https://www.thealternativetravelguide.com/2016/10/12/15-ideas-for-alternative-traveling-try-something-new/

[2] https://um.dk/en/danida-en/partners/

Research for this study indicates that the empirical field is a rather competitive one, as the respective organisations distance themselves and their practice from each other both in terms of ideology, purpose and practice. We find it interesting how agents in the empirical field can potentially learn from each other by acknowledging the challenges and similarities they share. Not only do the organisations have the same experience organising international volunteering, they also share an interest in ethical and sustainable practice, and face the challenges of adapting to new sustainability goals and demands. Thus, this study will discuss how organisations operating in the intersection between development work and tourism can ensure their basis of existence as travel agencies while simultaneously meeting the increasing expectations of sustainable and ethical practice in development work. The organisations' attempts of balancing between different functionalities, intentions and expectations will in this study be analysed as an experiential learning process. We will analyse the organisational learning as a process based on the organisations' experiences and reflections on these. We do not attempt to find any solutions for "best organisational practice". Rather, we explore a process of change and learning in the field of organised, international volunteering.

In a judicial context, the respective Danish NGOs that offer international volunteer programmes are beneficiaries of DANIDA, the international development cooperation of The Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Following the legal framework of the Danish Act of International Development Cooperation of 2013, later amended in 2014 and 2017, DANIDA works in agreement with universal declarations and conducts, e.g. The United Nations' Human Rights conventions. According to the International Development Cooperation Act, DANIDA aims to create economic growth in developing countries fighting poverty by promoting human rights, democracy, sustainable development, peace and stability in order to participate in the creation of a more peaceful, stable and equal world. The objective is "pursued through partnerships with developing countries and within the framework of internationally recognised principles and objectives for development cooperation and principles of humanitarian aid." (The International Development Act, 2013). It is further stated that the objective depends on cooperative partners, counting various civil societies and humanitarian organisations, as well as larger governmental international organs (e.g. UN, EU etc.), research institutions and Danish ministries.[2] DANIDA offers financial support to the civil society and non-governmental

[2] https://um.dk/en/danida-en/partners/

organisations that provide international humanitarian assistance and aid[3] and/or contributes to the development of strong, independent and diversified civil societies in the developing countries.[4] In this study, we examine organisations that have received DANIDA funding during recent years, encouraging and supporting their work, including their practice of organising international volunteering through partnerships in the Global South. (Appendix A4 & B4)

As a theoretical concept, international volunteering has only just become a field of interest to academics around the turn of the millennium, and has throughout recent years received increasing critique while simultaneously, as a phenomenon, becoming more common and popular in practice. Some of the criticism towards the phenomenon and practice points towards the problematic aspects that arise from considering the Global South as someone in need of 'our' help and knowledge, here referring to the help and knowledge of the Global North, in order to achieve positive social change and development (Wearing 2001). Some would critically suggest that these embedded ideas are revealing *white-saviour complexes*; refer to it as the *White Man's Burden* (poem by Kipling 1899), claimed to be used as a racist justification for Western imperial conquest built on the idea that the white race must help non-white races develop civilization[5]; or link it to Edward Said's critical concept of *Orientalism* (1978) describing the West's contemptuous depiction and portrayal of "The East," i.e. the Orient. Closely connected, development discourse and policies are claimed to be *Eurocentric*, not just in its geographical origin but in its epistemology: Development is a *system of knowledge* centred around Europe, thus, development work rearticulates the knowledge of Europe, and reproduces unequal power structures between the Global North and the Global South. From an economic perspective, critics argue that development has become a commodity provided by the Global North (McGloin & Georgeou 2016). From a social geographic perspective, development work is claimed to create a discursive dichotomy of 'us' and 'them'; developed countries and developing countries. This dichotomy enforces notions of superiority and inferiority with it, which consequently causes the upholding of uneven and restraining power structures between the Global North and the Global South (Ziai 2007). Critical sociolinguistic voices further claim that in spite of a linguistic transformation of the classifications and categories of the areas "in need of" help and development, from *Third World; Undeveloped;*

[3] https://um.dk/en/danida-en/partners/humanitarian-organisations/

[4] https://um.dk/en/danida-en/partners/civil-society-organisations/

[5] http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/rg_burden1.htm

Underdeveloped; Developing; Low-income countries; Global South etc., the actual practice of "dealing with" these areas as inferior remains . As long as the linguistic categories reinforce the superiority of the Global North, the maintenance of a development practice and system that produces global inequality is justified (see Theoretical Framework; Ziai 2007). Some even point towards how the use of these different categories has served as a cover-up for the exploitation of these areas' natural resources over time, and how *exploited* as a classification and category would represent the reality and history of these areas more adequately (Barbier 2011).

From a critical perspective, international volunteering carries traces back to the ideas and practices embedded in development work. The critical research on international volunteering is however claimed to mainly focus on the volunteers' experiences, and hence lack an empirical and analytical focus on host-communities affected by the phenomenon (McGehee & Andereck 2009). Indeed, large parts of the academic literature on international volunteering is analytically focused on and grounded in the motivations, perspectives and experiences of volunteers. Ironically, this study too was motivated by personal experiences with international volunteering. In 2011, one of us travelled to Kenya for eight months at the age of 18, working at an orphanage as a Global Contact volunteer. This trip was, as for many other international volunteers, during a sabbatical year to have adventurous intercultural experiences. The eight months in Kenya remain as a memorable and good personal experience, however, has throughout the years caused personal critical questioning of the phenomenon and practice of international volunteering. In fact, the experience affected the personal choice of academic direction, and in combination with increasing criticism of the field acted as motivation for this particular study. As a reaction to the existing literature's focus on volunteers' motivations and experiences, research presenting perspectives of host-communities have been increasingly requested in most recent years, encouraging empirical evidence into the actual impacts of international volunteering (e.g. Simpson 2004, Butcher & Smith 2009, Ingram 2011). Some of these studies point towards the role of the volunteer-sending organisations, and in particular how they can play an important role in facilitating the volunteers' expectations and hopes of 'making a difference' through proactive management prior, during, and after the volunteer travel programmes (Raymond & Hall 2008). Through several studies it has been explored how civil society and non-governmental organisations can serve as change agents, as they are claimed to be less restricted by constituted policies and as such, more able to challenge rigid structures and contribute with alternatives to normative ideas (Bebbington, Hickey & Mitlin

2008; Rouchier, Tubaro & Emery 2014; Yolles & Fink 2015; Yolles, Fink & Dauber 2011; Yolles, Funk & Frieden 2012).

In this study, we choose to put our focus on the sending organisations' practices (i.e their administration, management and evaluation of volunteers' experiences), their perspectives and considerations on sustainable and ethical international volunteering, and the change of practice following from their experiences and reflections. In this regard, we choose to apply experiential learning theory as a relevant parameter to understand the organisations' practice and change of practice. Learning theory has been applied to the empirical field of development work and cases of international volunteering before (e.g. Coghlan & Gooch 2011; Hartman et al. 2014; Roper & Pettit 2002). However, the literature again tends to focus on the motivation and learning of individual volunteers or has an implicit focus on efficiency of the sending organisation. As such, learning is often considered and applied as an optimisation tool for a better outcome of a specific practice. In addition, it appears that learning theory is most often being applied to empirical cases of planned change in organisations (Hendry 1996; Huy 2001). The focus on measured outcome in applied learning theory has been problematised, noticeably in the critical literature on organisational learning and knowledge processes, which instead explores the activities and processes unfolding in organisations as they engage in learning (Roper & Pettit, 2002; Pettit, Crossan & Vera, 2016). This is closely connected to another point of attention in the existing literature on learning in organisations, which argues for the necessity of an analytical distinction between learning organisations as entities and organisational learning as a process (Kluge & Schilling 2003; Sun & Scott 2003; Wallace 1998). Parts of the academic contributions to learning in organisations focus on the individual, motivational and emotional aspects of learning (Coghlan & Gooch 2011). Yet, another part of the existing literature criticises this particular focus on the individual, and how it is often being connected to effectiveness in bringing about planned change in organisations. These studies argue that learning and change in organisations should not depend on the motivation and engagement of the individual employee (Russ 2006). As an alternative, other studies suggest a social approach to learning (Elkjær 1996; 2001; Small & Irvine 2006). Studies applying learning theory to social empirical fields such as organisations often refer to Dewey's *theory of experience* (1897 in Kolb & Kolb 2005) or Kolb's *experiential learning theory* and his concept of *learning styles and spaces* (1984), which again refer back to Lewin's *field theory* and his concept of *life space* (1936 in Kolb & Kolb 2005). We consider the social theories of experience and learning beneficial to apply to our empirical field as they emphasise subjective experiences and

interactions. When examining organisations as a social field with learning subjects it has been problematised that most literature on how to develop learning organisations focus on learning of the individual employee. Elkjær (2001) suggests that an emphasis on the individual's learning - rather than on the practice and structure of the organisation - puts too much responsibility on the individual and prevents planned change to be implemented successfully. Based on this, Elkjær suggests an alternative approach to the empirical field of organisational change that looks in the direction of social learning theory. In this context, experiential learning theory presents a concrete, applicable theory which allows for analyses of the social aspects of learning, be it individual or organisational, planned or unplanned (e.g. Murray 2002; Yeo 2006). In this study, we choose to apply Kolb's experiential learning cycle (Kolb & Kolb 2005) as a framework for our analysis presenting the organisations' practice, experiences and change of practice as a learning process. We apply experiential learning theory to the empirical field in order to explore how organisations offering international volunteer programmes may serve as change agents in a field that has been criticised for its structural roots in imperialism, colonialism, exploitation, supremacy and racism. We aim to explore what an applied experiential learning framework may offer the empirical, criticised field of international volunteering organised by agents that seek to balance between humanitarian work and tourism, between altruism and realism.

This study explores organisations' experiences and learning processes within the Danish field of international volunteering, i.e. two Danish-international volunteer programmes and a Danish association working for sustainable change in the market for international volunteering. The research initiates from the idea that the changes of practice that occurs in the organisational field is correlated to the increasing criticism towards the phenomenon and practice of international volunteering. We further believe that the organisations accommodate customers' and society's increasing requests of sustainable and ethical practices. As such, the change of practice empirically explored in this study is linked to the criticism towards the practice and phenomenon of international volunteering, as well as a general noticeable increasing global interest in (social) sustainability. This is believed to cause several issues and dilemmas for the organisations, given that it risks colliding with their interest in maintaining their function, purpose and basis for funding and economic progress. As such, it becomes a question of priority and balance between altruism and realism. These considerations are unfolded through our analysis with an awareness of the dialectic between structure and agency.

1.1 Research Question

Why do agents in the Danish field of organised, international volunteering work towards change of organisational practices?

The research question is answered through four analytical work questions:

- What is the criticism towards international volunteering?
- How are the organisational practices presented and reflected by agents in the field?
- How do organisations learn from their experiences of working with volunteers?
- What changes occur in the organisational practices and why do these come to happen?

1.2 Delimitations

Preliminary interests and findings for further research

This study explores how organisations in the field of international volunteering are learning from criticism and experiences, and as such, how organisations present change agency in a field that has been criticised by its structural roots in imperialism, colonialism and racism embedded in development policy and humanitarian work. The focus of this study has developed from initial interests, through exploration and findings throughout the research process. Initially, our thought for the study was that it should regard the particular field of *voluntourism*. We were interested in focusing on volunteers themselves, their motivations, aims and experiences; and how these factors are incorporated into organisations' campaign strategies on social media; and if and how these factors are further integrated in the organisations' practices. We found social media to be an interesting angle and accessible empirical entry, given that the organisations use their online platforms on Facebook and Instagram actively in their practice of recruiting and working with the target group of young volunteers. Further, we anticipated doing ethnographic fieldwork by participating in events and workshops for potential volunteers and other stakeholders. As an alternative, we also considered focusing on the differences and similarities between travel agencies and organisations in the field of volunteer tourism, representing profit and non-profit suppliers in the market of international volunteering. We found that the market has both changed and expanded during recent years: Travel agencies are now equally and increasingly participative agents and suppliers in the field, thus international volunteering is no longer solemnly managed by humanitarian, non-governmental, non-profit organisations. In this way, it became clear to us that international volunteering can be conceptualised as a double-edged phenomenon: On one hand, as a humanitarian project motivated by altruistic ideas of 'doing good' and on the other hand, as a service or commodity motivated by demand from customers. This duality is actively explored and integrated in our further research.

As presented, we have chosen to move beyond the concept of *voluntourism* and volunteers' motivations to travel abroad to do good, as we found that this has already been the object of study several times. In order to ensure that our research contributes with new knowledge to the field, we have chosen to delineate our study and change the focus away from our initial research interests; the subjects of volunteers' and their motivations, the organisations' online campaign strategies, and the differences and similarities between profit and non-profit agents and practices. All along, we have aimed towards applying a critical analytical approach to the practices in international volunteering, especially directed towards the degree of

implementation - or lack of such - of social sustainability and ethics in the practices of international volunteering. Starting with these interests, we initially reached out to several travel agencies and non-profit organisations via email, proposing a constructive cooperation and critical research of their international volunteer (travel) programmes. However, the majority of agents and organisations which we reached out to, dismissed our proposal of a research cooperation. Especially the travel agencies found no interest in participating, explaining how they were simply too busy at the given time. Whether this was directly related to the current global pandemic, Covid-19, or simply reflecting a general disinterest in critical assessment of their profitable practices is uncertain. Nonetheless, it did force us to look for empirical data and research opportunities elsewhere. Our preliminary empirical data collection with three organisations showing great interest in critical research cooperation revealed other aspects which we found particularly interesting to explore: The organisations' awareness of the criticism towards their practice and motivation to change or reconsider their practice. Thus, this study contributes to the existing field of research on international volunteering by exploring how agents in the field are actively learning from experience and criticism and as such, how agents contribute to change in the criticised field of international volunteering.

The applied concepts of structure and agency, power, knowledge and discourse

In this study, we explore experiences and changes in the empirical field of international volunteering on the basis of post-development theory and learning theory, through an analysis of organisations' experiences and change agency in the field of international volunteering. In our analysis, we pay attention to the dialectic between structure and agency, as we aim to explore the agency of organisations in a field that is criticised for its roots in and its continuance of the structures from development policy. We further explore these aspects through an analytical focus on the components of power, knowledge and discourse in the empirical data. The concepts of power, knowledge and discourse are considered equally relevant as it interconnects structure and agency. In the study, we lean towards a Foucauldian concept of power. Challenging the idea that power is gained and wielded by people through sovereign acts of domination or coercion, Foucault instead conceptualised power as dispersed and pervasive. Following the Foucaldian concept, 'power is everywhere' and 'comes from everywhere' (Foucault 1998), and as such, power is neither an agency nor a structure. Foucault uses the term 'power/knowledge' to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge and 'truths'. Societies consist of *regimes of truth* that are constantly negotiated - socially and politically. A regime of truth is a discourse that is accepted and functions as a truth

in a given society at a given time. It results from scientific discourse and from institutions, and is constantly reinforced and redefined through the education system, the media, and political and economic ideologies. As such, a regime of truth results from a struggle between structures and agencies. In this study, we do not identify regimes of truth nor do we conduct a discourse analysis, but we do pay analytical attention to linguistic expressions in the empirical data that reveal changes (and continuances) of discourses and ideas of 'good practice' in the field of international volunteering. As we see it, discourse is revealing a struggle to define 'truth', and simultaneously revealing a struggle between structures and agencies. In this study, we further lean towards Berger and Luckmann's social constructionists and dialectical concept of structure and agency: Society forms the individuals who create society. As such, structure and agency dialectically reinforce and reconstruct each other, forming a continuous loop through institutions, internalisations and interactions (Berger & Luckmann 1966). In short, in this study, we consider power and knowledge to be inextricably interconnected, and discourse as revealing how power is socially embedded, constructed and negotiated between structures and agencies.

1.3 Definitions of central concepts

In this paragraph, we present our understanding and use of central terms and concepts.

Good will and altruism

Throughout this study the term 'good will' is frequently used. With this we refer to the desires, aims and ambitions of 'doing good' both on an individual, social and organisational level. Similarly, the word altruism is used frequently to explain similar motivational acts of 'doing good'. Altruism is defined as *the willingness to act in advantage to others, despite that it might be in disadvantage to oneself. It is the attitude to care about others, acting selfishlessly so that it benefits/helps them without receiving any acknowledgements or benefits for doing so*.[6]

Global North and Global South

Global North and Global North are terms that is commonly used to define and divide the high income countries from the low income countries. Although much (earlier) literature within the academic research field refers to the countries of our interest as distinctively developed and developing, we choose to refer to them as respectively the Global North and Global South. We do however acknowledge that geographically this terminology does not correspond accurately.[7]

Development

The use of the concept and phenomenon 'development' is considered outdated within our field of study at present day. Not only is it seen to follow a non-critical line of thought when assessing the meanings embedded in the theoretical term 'development'. It is further considered to follow a narrow minded and marginalizing pejorative dichotomy which labels the 'developed' and the 'under-developed', the superior and the inferior. In this study, notions of 'development work' and 'development organisations' refer to the organisations that operate within the international development sector. In addition, we regard these organisations to be in development itself, which we refer to as the learning organisations.

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[6] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/altruism

[7] https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/applied-and-social-sciences-magazines/north-and-south-global

Normality

The interconnected terms normal and normality are used in our qualitative coding of empirical data, and further in the analysis, in the context of the organisational practices and changes of these. These are at times used to describe something that 'used to be', eg. a practice or method that used to be applied within the organisation. We do not consider 'normal' to be a neutral term that can be objectively defined. On the contrary, we consider 'normal' to be a subjective idea, socially constructed through history, structures and power. In this study, ideas of 'normal' are considered to be a reflection of subjects' experience and perspective of the world (and relevant phenomena). We pay analytical attention to the conceptions and empirical use of normal and normality, but distance ourselves from the normative ideas that something can be 'normal' in this field. 'Normal' will therefore be used cautiously in this study, given how it carries with it the risk of being considered too normative and/or as lacking nuance.

Social sustainability

Following the UN Global Compact definition: *Social Sustainability is about identifying and managing business impacts, both positive and negative, on people. The quality of a company's relationships and engagement with its stakeholders is critical. Directly or indirectly, companies affect what happens to employees, workers in the value chain, customers and local communities, and it is important to manage impacts proactively. (...) While it is the primary duty of governments to protect, respect, fulfil and progressively realize human rights, businesses can, and should, do their part. At a minimum, we expect businesses to undertake due diligence to avoid harming human rights and to address any adverse impacts on human rights that may be related to their activities*[8]. As such, and for the purpose of this study, social sustainability shall not be defined as an absolute, but as a set of normative ideas that favours the subjects affected by business' practices and are increasingly required.

Change

When we refer to change throughout this study, it is primarily in regards to the progress or alteration of organisational practices. However also in regards to broader changes in discourses and ideologies. Changes of practice can be both planned and unplanned, altered and replaced.

[8] https://www.unglobalcompact.org/what-is-gc/our-work/social

Practice

The actions carried out by individuals and groups, in this study particularly in relation to the organisations' international volunteer programmes.

Knowledge

Knowledge is defined as the *understanding of or information about a subject that you get by experience or study, either known by one person or by people generally*.[9] In this study, we are particularly interested in agents' experiential knowledge and the knowledge that is taken for granted and embedded in practices, referred to as truisms.

Ideology

Ideology is defined as a *set of beliefs of principles, especially one on which a political system, party, or organisation is based.*[10] Further elaborated, ideology is *a form of social or political philosophy in which practical elements are as prominent as theoretical ones. It is a system of ideas that aspires both to explain the world and to change it.* [11]

[9] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/knowledge

[10] https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ideology

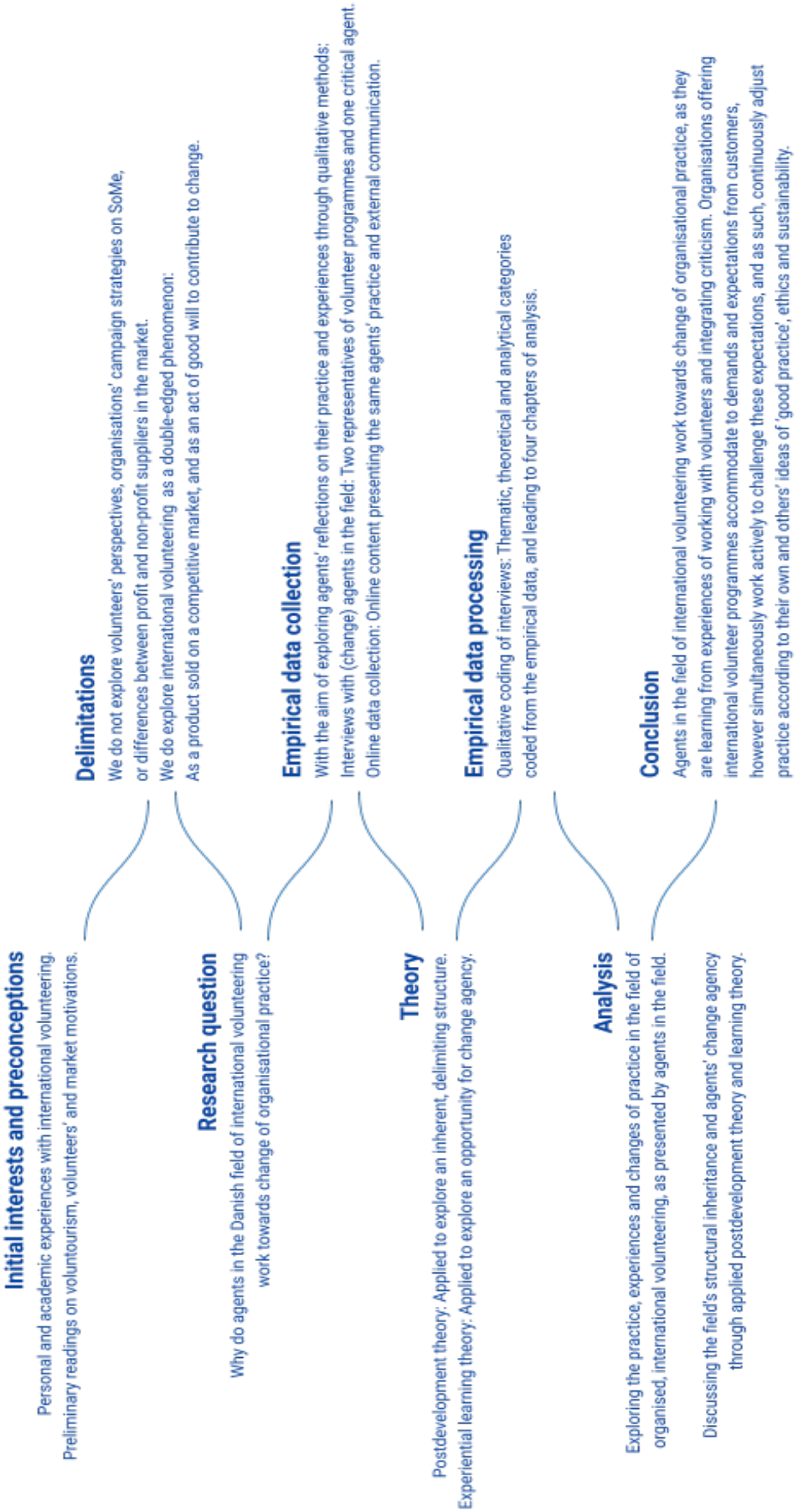
[11] https://www.britannica.com/topic/ideology-society

2.0 Methodology

In this paragraph, we present the methodological choices to our study. Through illustration, we present our research process from our initial interests and preconceptions to our conclusion. Following, we present our research strategy and the considerations behind our particular methodological choices. We further present how we have have explored the empirical field and explain how our collection of empirical data has affected our research. Further, we present how we have methodologically collection our empirical data through qualitative interviews and online data collection. Then, we present our empirical data has been qualitatively coded and guided our structure of analysis. Lastly, we present our themes and structure of analysis and how it relates to our collected empirical data and choice of theories.

2.1 Research Process

Figure 1: Illustration of the research procces



2.2 Research Strategy

In this paragraph, we present our research strategy and the considerations behind our particular methodological choices. Throughout the research for this study, we follow a qualitative, exploratory research approach. We have collected empirical data for the specific purpose of answering the research question through an inductive research strategy. We have entered the empirical field with certain preconceptions, which is reflected in our research question, literature search, collection of empirical data (including a semi structured interview guide) and our following analysis. However, our preconceptions have continuously changed during our research process, and have been refined following our findings from the empirical data. As such, our empirical data is guiding our research. We are not deductively testing off a theoretical hypothesis, however we acknowledge that given our personal interests and experiences as well as preliminary academic knowledge of the field, our research has not been initiated nor carried out without theoretical preconceptions. The exploratory research approach has been chosen, as we do not aim to find any definitive and conclusive results. Rather, we aim to stay open to different nuances and adapt to findings in the empirical field. The results from our analysis are presenting one way to understand the empirical field through a particular set of theories and methods, and as such, our results are open for further research. In addition, as our research is conducted on the basis of a smaller sample of the empirical data our results cannot be directly generalised to a broader context. The exploratory approach does indeed affect, but does not decrease the reliability and validity of this study. (Stebbins 2001) The exploratory, qualitative research approach is further considered beneficial when studying a change, as:

> *[..] only qualitative methods are sensitive enough to allow the detailed analysis of change, while quantitative methods are only able to "assess that a change has occurred over time but cannot say how (what processes were involved) or why (in terms of circumstances and stakeholders)*" (Kohlbacher 2006: 8).

In this study, we explore a change of practice in the empirical field of organised, international volunteering through agents' experiences and reflections. The broader object of study, i.e. the change of practice, is reflected in our structure of analysis: We start by introducing the criticism towards international volunteering, then we explore the organisations' *prior* practice, followed by the organisations' experiences of working with volunteers, and finally we explore the organisations' change of practice. This particular structure of analysis is simultaneously following the experiential learning process: It enables us to explore the nuances in a learning

process where agents used to do something, then try something different, and now do a third based on their experiences. The circular element of an experiential learning process (as presented by Kolb's *experiential learning cycle*) is difficult to reflect through our particular structure of analysis. However, we emphasise that the results of our analysis should be read as momentary reflections of the organisations' learning process, as experienced and expressed by our informants. As the empirical field explored in this study is continuously changing, the results from our analysis can not be considered definitive.

2.2 Exploring the empirical field

In this paragraph, we explain how our exploration of the empirical field and concrete collection of empirical data has affected our preconceptions and research. Through our literature search and interviews, we became aware that our initial interest in studying motivations and impacts of voluntourism has already been the object of research before. However, from our preliminary research, we identified a need to revisit the field. As it has already been stated, we will explore how Danish non-profit organisations in the field of international volunteering attempt to integrate critical approaches and knowledge, and implement sustainable and ethical practices.

We started out with an initial interest in discussing *voluntourism* as a broad phenomenon by collecting data from the various types of agencies - non-profit organisations and for-profit enterprises - that offer voluntourism programmes in different forms, yet similar in many ways. We wanted to detect the motivations, ideas, intentions and acts of 'doing good' and its impacts in the environment of voluntourism, meaning both volunteers and host communities. Through an analysis of the elements of 'good' in the empirical data, we wanted to critically discuss the impacts of 'good intentions' and, what we assume was, a discrepancy between initial motivations and actual impact. As we moved forward, it became clear that this discrepancy between motivations and impacts of voluntourism is a relatively well-researched topic in the academic literature, and seemingly also a topic of growing interest in the empirical field. Both from our literature research and our collection of empirical data, it seemed like our critical approach echoed the heavily criticised and problematic aspects of *voluntourism* already acknowledged as a problem. This might be due to our specific set of empirical data, as the representatives we have talked to represent non-profit organisations known for their social and ethical responsibility. However, our exploratory research method of collecting empirical data also showed us that the empirical field is divided between those agents who have an interest in

changing towards an ethical and sustainable practice, and those who do not appear to have this interest or simply have other priorities. The travel agencies, all of whom did not have an interest in sharing data and knowledge with us, are for-profit enterprises selling experience products. Because of this, it did not come as a surprise that they were less interested in using time or resources on a critical research of their travel program. This first stage of research showed us that the relevant problem is seemingly not one of awareness, but one of willingness and openness to criticism, reflection and changes towards new practices.

The unwillingness of the profit-enterprises to cooperate led us to limit our field of interest to solemnly direct our focus towards Danish non-governmental organisations working within the field of international volunteering; hence, the three representatives we have talked to are all working within this field. The first representative works as a project manager in a non-profit volunteer programme, the second as a volunteer coordinator in another non-profit volunteer programme, while the third used to work as a volunteer coordinator, then started her own volunteer programme, and recently co-founded an organisation that works for a sustainable change through consultancy, education and knowledge sharing in the market for international volunteering. Furthermore, common for their professional function is that they have had their main organisational practices of cross-border activities put on hold for the time being, given the global travel restrictions due to Covid-19.

As we talked to our chosen representatives of the empirical field, it became clear that the field is both one of similarities and potential cooperation, but also one of competition and perceived dissimilarity. During the conversations with the informants, they expressed a clear interest in which other organisations we worked with. This might be explained by a wish to share knowledge and further help us to reach the relevant agents, while it could also be an attempt to secure their own representation. The representatives are aware of each other's existence and function in the field, but do not currently (April 2021) cooperate. In many ways, this is not deemed abnormal, as they represent independent organisations working with their own individual programs, visions, employees and budgets. Nonetheless, as they work within the very same market, and with similar intentions of changing their volunteer programmes towards a more sustainable practice at the very same time, it is striking that the representatives appear to distance themselves and their work so distinctively from each other. Already before we analysed our collected data, we were of the impression that the representatives could very well make use of each other in the process of learning and adjusting their programmes. As such, a preliminary finding from our research was that we observed a possibility for more knowledge

sharing and cooperation internally in the broader organisational field of non-profit international volunteering. In close connection to our theoretical lens on *post-development theory* (see Theoretical Framework) and its critical questioning of structures and knowledge, this first finding leads us to ask how the organisations are learning, and which knowledge is being used in the process of changing towards more ethical and sustainable practices.

We aim to explore what and whose knowledge and ethical considerations of 'good' causes the changes of practice. We consider it relevant to explore what and whose knowledge is turned into new practices, in particular because the programmes have educating and knowledge-sharing functions. Through preparatory courses previous to the international volunteer work, the volunteers are presented to and educated in cultural understanding, cultural encounters and the organisational perceptions of 'the good volunteer'. As such, we argue that the organisers of the volunteer programmes have a responsibility as educational institutions given that they are communicating knowledge and perceptions of what 'doing good' entails to their volunteers . In this regard, we find it necessary to be critical towards which knowledge is conveyed in the field and further discuss: Who acts as experts for volunteers' good practice and what consequences does this have? Is it academics with a theoretical understanding of cultural encounters? Is it professionals such as teachers and child psychologists? Is it internal communication advisers or do the organisations employ external consultants? Or is it partner organisations in the host country and professionals in the local community? These questions have helped us explore and further understand what and whose knowledge is used to compose and complete the organisational ethical guidelines and practices of their travel programmes.

2.3 Collection of empirical data

The study is based on qualitative empirical data collected through interviews with representatives from Danish non-governmental organisations working with international volunteering. The data includes informal conversations as well as semi-structured interviews with volunteer coordinators from two Danish NGOs, ActionAid (Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke) and DanChurchAid (Folkekirkens Nødhjælp) that have both been offering and organising international volunteer programmes through several decades. The respective volunteer programmes offered and organised by the two NGOs are Global Contact and Go Global. The interviews were conducted with coordinators of the volunteer programmes: With their knowledge, experiences and reflections they are in the analysis referred to as being both

representatives of the organisations' volunteer programme, informants for this study and change agents in the field. The two cases were chosen for their empirical value, as they both currently are or have been restructuring their volunteer programmes, and as such, they represent a change in the empirical field. They are both assumed to be open to constructive criticism towards their organisational practices, as they have an explicit interest in following, reflecting, or even pushing towards an ethical and social sustainable change through their organisational practice. As such, it is found that the two volunteer programmes present somewhat *atypical* cases in a broader context of organised international volunteering, as their motivations for change appear particularly prominent. As previously presented, we initially intended to include data from travel agencies offering similar volunteer programmes. However, as none of these agencies had interest in a research cooperation, we instead include these refusals as data. With the main purpose of their activities being economic profit, we interpret that their refusal stems from a lack of interest in critical assessments of their business' social impact. Academic research on the same study area and with similar data does however show that private enterprises offering travel programmes for volunteers abroad benefit economically from improvements in their responsibility communications and practices (Smith & Font, 2015).

Two semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of the volunteer programmes Global Contact and Go Global (see Appendix A and Appendix B). The interview guides (see Appendix A3 & Appendix B3) had been prepared with an interest in keeping a focus on the concrete subject of interest: The informants' reflections on the organisational practice and the organisations' change of practice. We attempted to be open towards new perspectives and concrete experiences from the field that we as researchers may not have considered prior to entering the field. However, the questions in the interview guide, and the way we collected and analysed the data are evidently affected by our initial interests and positioning (see Research Field). When we asked the representatives about their organisation's concrete experiences and evaluations of the volunteer programmes they have been offering, it was primarily with the aim of getting insights into the knowledge and considerations that have led them to change practice. It was assumed that the organisations have concrete examples of 'used to' practices that they now distance themselves from, in order to align with their present approach of 'doing good' or 'good practice'. When we asked about the actual change of practice, it was to explore how new ideas and intentions of 'doing good' is translated into new practices of 'doing good'. Bearing in mind that the change of practice is most likely a long-

term process with numerous stages, we chose to ask separately what concrete practices the organisation is moving away from and what alternative practices they are aiming towards.

2.3.1 Qualitative, semi structured research interviews

This paragraph presents our methodological approach to interviews, reflections on how the interviews were conducted and how they contribute to answer our research question. Our choice of conducting semi structured interviews with our informants allowed for us to stay focused and explore our field of interest, continuously regulating our questions and our approach, and further expand the research field towards perspectives that were along the way considered relevant, important or significant in the empirical field. Following Brinkmann and Kvale (2015), the purpose of a qualitative research interview is the production of knowledge. It is a professional conversation with a structure and a purpose, with the attempt to understand the world from the point of view of the people interviewed, perceiving these people as independent of discourses and causal laws, as subjects who act and are actively engaged in meaning making. The research interview is based on the conversations of the everyday life, defined and controlled by the interviewer, where knowledge is constructed in the interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer. (3-7)

For the purpose of this study, semi structured research interviews were conducted as a means of collecting empirical data to be analysed upon. Separate interview guides were produced, and sent to our informants prior to the interviews. The interviews were conducted and transcribed in Danish, however when actively used in this study they have been translated to English. Evidently, by having an interview guide, considerations have been made in regards to which direction we would like to take the interview, which topics we would like for the informants to reflect and elaborate upon and so forth. The interview guides reflect our pre understandings of this field, however, the attempt has been to also allow for the informants to influence the structure of the interview and perhaps influence our perceptions of the topic. With this, we have stayed open towards new ideas, reflections and aspects which we did not necessarily consider prior to the interviews. Through semi structured interviews, we aim to investigate and understand the informants' experiences, reflections and knowledge regarding the given field. Prior to the conducted interviews, our informants were made aware of our research interest and approach through introductory email correspondences. These emails were sent to various national non-profit organisations and for-profit enterprises offering international volunteer programmes. Eventually, two volunteer programmes (Go Global and Global Contact)

represented by employees in two Danish non-profit organisations offered to participate in and contribute to our research. We were later made aware of a third organisation, NGO PILOT, working actively to influence and implement sustainable practices in the Danish market for international volunteering, who likewise agreed to contribute with knowledge through interview.

2.3.2 Online data collection

Aside from the empirical data collected through qualitative semi-structured interviews, complimentary empirical data was collected online on the web pages of the three organisations. This data has primarily been used to describe the empirical cases and the empirical field, and as such, it is less actively implemented in the analysis. It has however provided us with the opportunity to uncover and explore the organisations' different communicative methods used to present each organisation's ethical and sustainable practices. As such, shorter paragraphs and citations have been translated and directly implemented in our analysis, supporting our exploratory qualitative research method.

2.4 Qualitative coding of interviews

In this section, we present how our empirical data have been coded following qualitative methodology. The analytical themes and structure for the analysis were found directly in our empirical data, although admittedly affected by our individual interests and interpretations. Following a social constructivist approach, we consider the meaning and value of the empirical data to be found through interpretation. We do not consider the data to have any objective 'true' meaning outside an individual interpretation of it. Nor do we claim our specific interpretation of the data to be more truthful or reflective of reality than any other reading of the data might be, as we do not subscribe to an ontological understanding of one true reality to exist. In relation to this, we have chosen not to use a software programme to organise and analyse our data, as we found that this could potentially compromise our ability to make nuanced interpretations and contextual understandings of what was expressed. We want to stress that we do not believe that it is possible to code empirical data objectively. As such, we choose to be transparent with our subjective interpretations.

As primary empirical data for our research, three qualitative in-depth interviews form the primary empirical data for our research. The interviews were semi structured with interview guides made in advance, and as such, they are thematically focused and limited by our interest

and research question. The further processing of our data, including coding and analysis, are similarly structured and limited by what we see as researchers. To be transparent, our coding is largely affected by our individual experiences and motivations, interests, research question and reading of literature. In particular, our coding of the data is affected by our reading of post-development theory and organisational learning theory, and by our interest in understanding why and how changes in organisational practices happen. From the initial phases of our research, we have been looking for the potential and agency of good will to change a structurally-defined field. From our reading and coding of the empirical data, it became clear that our research question is part of a broader structure/agency debate. Some parts of our data point towards the determinative power of economic and political structures, while other parts of our data suggest the agency of individuals (engagement, good will, learning and resources) to be able to change the structures embedded in the practice of international volunteering.

In figure 2, we present the categories qualitatively coded from the empirical data, first presented in arbitrary order as they appear in the empirical data, then thematically ordered for our structure of analysis, forming the ground for our four analytical chapters. The categories are not literal samples of the empirical data, but translations and compositions of repetitive patterns in the empirical data. The categories are reflecting both our initial motivations for research (volunteers' goodwill, awareness, engagement, ethics etc.), our reading of the literature (voluntourism, learning, post-development etc.) and unforeseen aspects from the empirical field (resources, normality, assimilation, market demands, sustainability etc.). This combination of sources reflects our inductive method as well as our own learning process. The categories are put into thematic order for the structure of analysis: From prior practice, through, aided by experience and reflection, to change of practice. With this structure, we attempt to unfold the empirical data in an analysis that is meaningful, easy to understand, have room for advanced understanding and answers our research question at the same time.

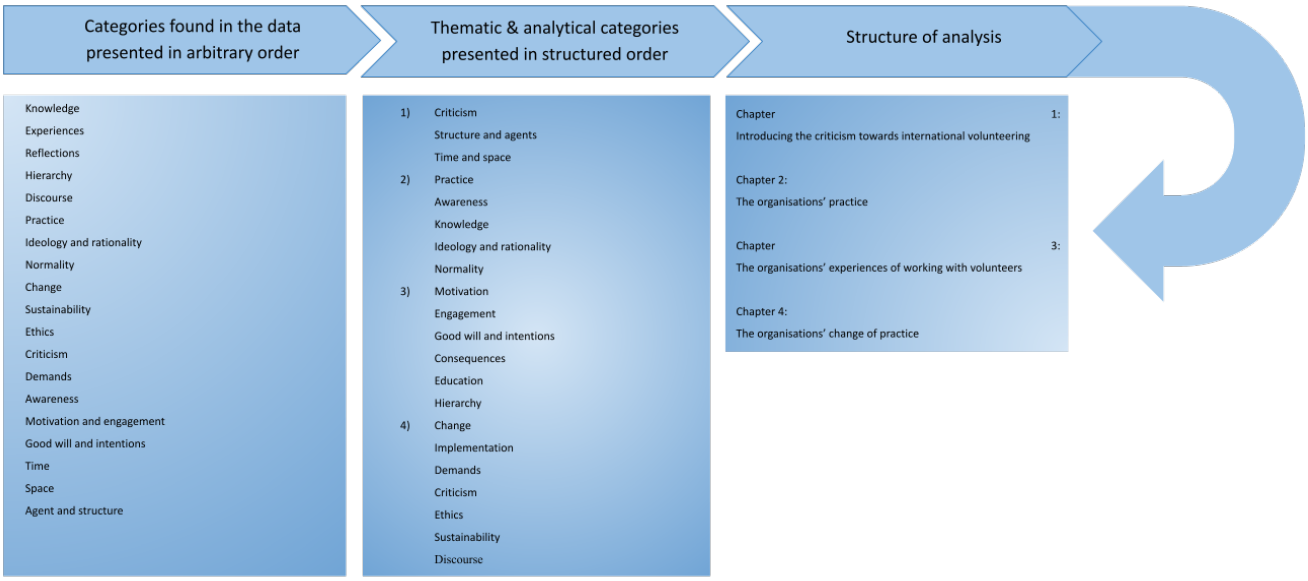


Figure 2: Qualitative coding of the empirical data

The empirical data collected through interviews is qualitatively coded into categories and composed into themes for our structure of analysis. As such, the themes derived from our qualitative coding have resulted in four chapters of analysis: 1) The criticism towards international volunteering, 2) The organisations' practice, 3) The organisations' experiences of working with volunteers, and 4) The organisations' change of practice.

2.5 Themes and structure of analysis

In this paragraph, we present our choice of themes and structure of analysis, and how it relates to our choice of theories (post-development and learning theory) and theoretical concepts (structure and agency).

A first review of the empirical data collected through interviews points towards two indicative answers to our research question: One is that organised, international volunteering is an unregulated market primarily controlled by demands from customers, and that customers are increasingly demanding transparent, sustainable and ethical practices. The other is that the organisations change their practice as a result of employees' individual and professional learning processes, experiences, motivations and ideology. Through our analysis, we discuss these two indicative answers by unfolding the nuances in between. Our analysis is structured around themes found directly from the empirical data, although influenced by our readings of post-development and learning theory. In the first chapter of our analysis, we present the empirical criticism towards the phenomenon of international volunteering. In the second chapter of the analysis, we explore our informants' reflections on the organisations' *usual*

practice. The third chapter deals with the organisations' experiences of working with volunteers as part of a learning process. In the fourth chapter of the analysis, we consider the organisations' change of practice as a result of their experiences of working with volunteers and reflections on their practice. As such, the structure of our analysis follows a process of learning, inspired by Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb & Kolb 2005). It is important to establish that the process of learning is not considered to be linear, but rather a continual spiral that allows for new knowledge and advanced understandings to enter over time, depending on the learning subjects and the learning environment. Thus, results of our analysis should be read as a momentary reflection of the organisations' learning processes, as experienced and expressed by our informants. We explore the organisations' practice, experiences and change of practice as reflected and presented by our informants. Our empirical data is collected at a time when the organisations' usual practices were not a possibility due to world wide travel restrictions. Reflections on these practices should therefore be understood in the light of this. However, when asked about the organisational practice, our informants' offer more than simple answers to their 'practice as usual'. Their presentations and reflections on the organisational practice reveal how practice, knowledge, rationality and ideology are interdependently related. More precisely, it reveals how practice, rationality and ideas of 'good' are defined by norms and knowledge. As an introduction and basis for our analysis, we present the criticism towards international volunteering found in the empirical field. Reflections on the organisations' practices analysed in the second chapter of our analysis lead to the change of practice that is explored in the third chapter of our analysis. As such, our analysis of the organisations' practice, experiences and change of practice follows the frame of an experiential learning cycle where subjects' knowledge, experiences, actions and reflections are continuously and circularly pushing the learning process.

In advance of the analysis, the data collected through interviews was coded as presented above. Clarified by the coding, a large part of our empirical data contains a power dimension. Categories like knowledge, rationality, normality, ideology, ethics and discourse, are difficult to unfold and discuss without some sort of concept of power. In our analysis, we explore this power dimension through an awareness of the dialectic between structure and agency. Two indicative perceptions from our preliminary readings of the empirical data are explored in this context: The perception that organisations change their practice because of market demands, or might not be able to change at all, put its emphasis on the determinative structure of the market. On the other side of the spectrum, the perception that organisations change their practice as a

result of individual learning processes and ideologies, stress the capacity of individuals to act independently. We consider the structure/agency debate to be compatible with our use of post-development theory and learning theory; where the former is emphasising the limitations of structures and the latter the possibilities of agency. However, we do not consider neither structure nor agency to be absolute measures nor independent from each other. We lean towards Berger and Luckmann's concept of structure and agency as dialectically reproducing each other. Similarly, we do not consider the theories to be in direct opposition to each other, but rather contributing to each other. Through analysis of our empirical data, we discover the intersections and ambiguities between structure and agency in the field of organisational change in the field of international volunteering. To elaborate, we will pay analytical attention to statements that do not fit perfectly into one theoretical explanation or that one theory - be it post-development or learning theory - cannot explain alone. Statements presenting our informants' reflections, intentions and practice might be equivocal or even contradicting, which will be analysed through a combination of post-development theory and learning theory. In this way, we attempt to find the nuances in between agency and structure in the field of organised international volunteering.

3.0 Empirical Data

In this paragraph, we will present the three sets of empirical data as three cases for analysis. Two of the cases represent an organisation, a volunteer programme and a representative. The third represents an association and a representative.

Empirical case A

The organisation: DanChurchAid

DanChurchAid (Danish: Folkekirkens Nødhjælp) is a Danish non-governmental organisation established in the wake of the first World War by a group of Christian priests in 1922. Accordingly, the priests felt a calling to help people in need, "impartial on their participation in the war".[12] In continuation of this, it is stated how the organisation's projects are still based on Christian principles and the obligation to help people in need, supporting the poorest people in

[12] https://www.noedhjaelp.dk/det-goer-vi/om-os

the world by valuing human rights and equality.[13] The organisation is part of the global humanitarian network ACT Alliance, a coalition of 145 churches and faith-based organisations working together in over 120 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalized people.[14]

The volunteer programme: Go Global

Go Global is DanChurchAid's travel portal for volunteers, in this study referred to as a volunteer programme. *The world awaits - are you joining?*[15] is the sentence you meet when first entering the webpage of Go Global. The programme has yearly organised more than 400 individual volunteers to their international partner projects with the aim for volunteers to *gain knowledge on DanChurchAid's work, foreign cultures - and not least themselves*[16]. Go Global has offered volunteer programmes in Nepal, Palestine and Malawi. However, Go Global sent out their last group of individual volunteers in Autumn 2019, as they will henceforth focus more on organising programmes for students through partnerships with educational institutions ('efterskoler' and 'højskoler').

The representative: Jesper Hansen

Jesper Hansen is working in DanChurchAid's team for Retail and Volunteering as Project Manager. Representing the volunteer programme Go Global, we conducted an interview with Jesper, who specifies: *Go Global is me, 30 hours a week and a student assistant, 6 hours* (Appendix A ll. 163-164). Jesper has been in charge of planning, organising and conducting the programme for volunteers and schools, including the contact with international offices and their coordinators, the local projects, correspondence with the volunteers, both prior, during and after their stay. He has further been in charge of matching volunteers with volunteer projects based on an interview conducted via phone, educational preparation during a 2-3 day workshop and later, evaluations of the programme and the volunteers' experiences.

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[13] https://www.noedhjaelp.dk/det-goer-vi/om-os

[14] https://actalliance.org

[15] https://www.noedhjaelp.dk/vaer-med/go-global

[16] https://www.noedhjaelp.dk/vaer-med/go-global

Case B

The organisation: Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke

Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke (MS) is a Danish non-governmental organisation, which, as a part of the international alliance and global federation ActionAid, works to eradicate poverty and injustice. MS was the established post World War II in 1944, with the aim to reconcile and rebuild a demolished Europe. In 1963, MS sent out their first team of so called 'volunteers for developing countries' (Danish: ulandsfrivillige) to Eastern Africa, financed through Danish State aid.[17] Today, MS works both nationally and internationally (as a part of ActionAid) with political and human rights based awareness raising, climate related issues, refugee and emergency/disaster aid and development work in more than 45 countries worldwide[18].

The volunteer programme: Global Contact

Global Contact is MS' international volunteer programme, organising and assisting volunteer work stays, internships and work camps abroad. The target group is primarily young Danes at the ages between 18-25. The volunteer stays have a minimum duration of 12 weeks, primarily outside of Europe, including 4 weeks at an educational platform where GlobalContact employees welcome and teach the volunteers before they are sent out to stay with either a local family, the host-workplace or in an apartment shared with other volunteers. The purpose of the educational platform is to create a 'soft landing' for the volunteers, before they are sent out to local communities. Here they are introduced to volunteer work and what this entails, taught the local languages along with basic cultural customs and norms, adjusting them to their new temporary life in a foreign country away from their everyday lives in Denmark. The platforms are located in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, El Salvador, Palestine, Kenya and Zambia (for specific groups, Nepal and Bolivia are also an option), with the volunteer projects present in numerous additional countries worldwide.[19]

The representative: Caroline Kaae Therbo-Pedersen

Caroline is working for MS in the Global Contact team with the professional title Africa Coordinator. Caroline is in charge of the volunteer programmes in Africa including the contact with country offices and their coordinators, the local partner projects. Additionally, she is

[17] https://www.ms.dk/om-ms/historie

[18] https://www.ms.dk/arbejde/her-arbejder-vi

[19] https://www.globalcontact.dk/frivilligt-arbejde

responsible for the correspondence with volunteers, both prior, during and after the programme. As a representative for Global Contact, we have had on-going email correspondence and conducted a semi-structured interview with Caroline.

Given the Covid-19 situation, which has disabled the organisation from cross-border activities, Caroline has been assigned the task of conducting and assembling previous work regarding ethical issues related to volunteer work, in particular volunteers' work with children. In this context, she has been working on the organisation's ethical conduct of practice. Furthermore, she is currently gathering data from various local host-communities in order to gain greater insight into how these communities perceive and respond to the volunteer programmes, their concrete experiences with MS' volunteers and how to possibly change the organisation's and the volunteers' practices, so it accommodates tthe needs of the host-communities better.

Case C:

The association: NGO PILOT

The Danish association, NGO PiILOT, aims to direct attention towards the manifold complex issues related to international volunteer work, and the market (profit/non-profit) around this. As such, they make themselves available as *pilots* for non-governmental organisations and other actors working with international volunteering. NGO PILOT argue that the main issue in international volunteering is a lack of knowledge and awareness regarding the problems and dilemmas related to the market. They find that there is a general misconception of international volunteering being an indisputably good act, which they argue neglects the many potentially damaging consequences it can cause on local host communities.[20] The association is working to initiate and implement a sustainable change in the market for international volunteering through means of awareness raising, knowledge exchange, advocacy and consultancy of and with the various actors involved, research and data collection, and political engagement.[21] With these activities presented as their mission, we choose to consider the association as a knowledge-exchanging consulting group, working for a sustainable change in the market for international volunteering.

[20] https://www.ngopilot.org/problemetmedfrivillig-rejsemarkedet

[21] https://www.ngopilot.org/vores-vision

The representative: Eva Cian

Eva Cian is the founder and CEO of the association NGO PILOT. She initially established the association from a personal cognition that the market for international volunteering is unsustainable. Both as a former volunteer and as a former founder of a volunteer-sending organisation, she experienced that the particular structure of the market for international volunteering made it difficult for both volunteers and organisations to navigate: The regulation of the market and the transparency between partner projects, organisations as intermediates and volunteers was considered too low. As such, neither organisations nor volunteers can be sure that they 'do good' with their actions. With these experiences, Eva is considered to be both personally and professionally motivated to change the market for international volunteering.

3.1 How the empirical cases are positioned

In this paragraph, we shortly present how we choose to position the empirical cases in our study - both as a resource for knowledge to this study and in the context of the broader empirical field. As a resource for knowledge, we do not consider the representatives to act as experts in the field of international volunteering. Rather, we will be critical towards their bias as professionals in the field. We include their subjective experiences and reflections as empirical data to explore how their experiences are presenting a learning process in the organisations, and further how they present change agency in the empirical field. The representatives are considered to have agency both in their professional function and as individuals. As previously presented, the three representatives that offered to participate in our study seemed eager to share their knowledge and contribute to the research. Our empirical data represent only a selection of the existing programmes for international volunteering. The two organisations' interest to contribute with knowledge suggests that our selection of cases represent some of the more progressive and receptive agents in the empirical field. All three organisations are currently working towards change in the practice of international volunteering - either internally in their own practice or as external partners.

4.0 Theoretical Framework for Analysis

Our analysis is conducted on a basis of post-development theory and learning theory in relation to the field of organisational change of practice. This combination of theory serves to unfold our empirical data, and help to answer our research question: Why do agents in the Danish field of organised, international volunteering work towards change of organisational practice? In this paragraph, we present our chosen theoretical framework for analysis. First, an overview of the chosen academic field on post-development theory is presented, including its relevance to this study and how it is applied in the analysis. Secondly, an overview of the chosen academic field on learning theory in relation to organisational change is presented, including its relevance to this study and how it is applied in the analysis. Lastly, the combination of post-development theory and learning theory is unfolded, including how this particular combination of theory is relevant for the analytical purpose of this study.

4.1 Post-Development Theory

Following Aram Ziai (2007), the 'post-development school' finds that it is time to consider alternatives to development, both as a concept and as a phenomenon, instead of continuing exploring alternative ways to create development in the Global South. It is as such time to condemn development and disregard the manifold attempts to reach or create economic growth, industrialisation and modernisation and instead acknowledge that alternatives to the 'Western way' of seeing and doing society already exist. (Ziai 2007: prefix)

The concept 'development' in its traditional sense should according to critics be considered Eurocentric as it declares Western Europe and North America to be 'developed' while in contrast Africa, Asia and Latin America are 'underdeveloped'. It differentiates between those societies constituted around an idealistic set of norms that contra those societies diverging from such, creating a dichotomy of 'us' and 'them' by categorising the deviants as inferior to those societies and populations that are able to constitute these ideals, the superiors. Development discourse is considered to derive directly from colonial discourse, explaining the dominant Northern/Western perception and conceptualisation of the South and further, the idea that 'they' need 'our' help in order to gain and maintain a 'good life' in accordance to the universal standards, as it is envisioned by the North. It is, moreover claimed to simply take for granted that material affluence and a generally higher standard of living equals better life quality for all individuals in any given society, and thereby neglects to critically assess the various potentially necessary indicators for 'a good life' and/or 'a good society', aside from those related to economy and materialism. Development is authoritarian and technocratic, where the re-organisation of societies according to notions of universal standards is automatically perceived as an equivalent to positive social change, and as such, it upholds uneven power structures, where those defining the discourse of development are the most powerful. Measures done 'in the name of development' are claimed to have had serious consequences on those societies and communities that are, according to the development discourse, considered inferior. Enforcing development upon entire societies and communities, not allowing them the chance to decide themselves whether or not they desired a 'developed' way of life, these societies and communities have accordingly been disempowered. Ziai argues that when perceiving 'the good society' and 'the good life' from such a homogenous perspective and universal conception, an inconspicuous and hazardous position of power is present. (2007: 8-9)

In order to fully comprehend the evolution of post-development and its role in international debates regarding the topic of development, it is according to Escobar (in Ziai 2007) necessary to assess its position within the field that is development studies. The word post-development traces back to an international conference in Geneva in 1991. Six years later, it had manifested itself within the field of development studies, used by practitioners as well as critical scholars. Escobar deems it necessary to assess the past in order to understand how development has conceptualised itself within fields of social science. In addition, three main moments and correspondingly three theoretical orientations are emphasised. For the purpose of this study, it is worthwhile including the critical approaches to development as a cultural discourse that came to light during the late 80s and the 90s. This began when a great span of international cultural critics started to question the very idea of development itself. Development was perceived and analysed as a Western-born discourse, which "*operated as a powerful mechanism for cultural, social and economic production of the Third World*" (ibid: 18-19). Escobar further argues that the notion of post-development stems from post-structuralist critiques. Post-structuralist thinkers have raised questions as to why and how Asia, Africa and Latin America have been categorised as 'under-developed' and as belonging to 'the Third World', the Global South, through means of discourses and practices of development, and further, what consequences this has eventually had. Through means of de-constructions of development, post-structuralist hypothesised the potentiality of a post-development era. For some, this meant an era where development would no longer be a main regulating principle of social life nor would it take place solemnly 'under Western eyes'. Others found it necessary to rely less on expert knowledge and instead reconsider and revalue the opinion towards the cultures of indigenous people, and as such, begin to acknowledge and appreciate their traditional ways and attempts to create a more humane, culturally and ecologically sustainable world. In addition to this, Escobar suggests, that social movements (e.g. NGOs) and grassroots mobilisation should be recognised as active agents in the construction of this new era (ibid: 19-20). Following Escobar, post-development enables the creation of new discourses and representations, which are not necessarily constructed nor mediated by development. Therefore, it calls for a modification of the practices of knowing and doing 'the political economy of truth' defining the development regime. Thus, an urgency for a reproduction of the centres and agents of knowledge production exists, meaning that the forms of knowledge produced by the 'objects' of development should be recognised in order for them to become subjects of their own right. This can be carried out by either focusing on the reactions and resistance of the local people towards the 'development' discourses and practices enforced

upon them, or by focusing on alternative strategies carried out by social movements when encountering development projects (ibid: 20-21). Nustad argues that the development critique within post-development theories is interesting, however, as it does not suggest alternatives on how to move forward, Nustad argues that it should be considered inadequate. Nonetheless should the lack of contributions and alternatives not overshadow its manifold attempts of analysis to display why development practice does not appear to work. Given that e.g. poverty is challenging and problematic on a global scale, the criticism towards development should therefore not be disregarded (Nustad in Ziai 2007: 35).

Several theorists of the post-development school consider development post Second World War to be an evident extension of colonialism, where modernisation theories were founded upon the understanding that the American way of doing society was for all to follow as an ideal. Thus, the world and its numerous societies were no longer perceived and acknowledged as diverse but instead as a homogenous and unitised mass, consequently categorising 'under-developed' societies based on given sets of conditions and political structures. Nustad finds that most post-structuralist and post-development critical arguments towards development are based on a Foucauldian thought, inclined to perceive development as a discourse that organises and constitutes the addressed phenomenon. Analysis conducted from a Foucauldian perspective can serve to illustrate the various facets of power and politics, in what has previously been conceived as more neutral and practical issues, e.g. how to bring development to poor societies. Nustad states that studies intending to go beyond the limitations of discursive approaches, examines development as something that has taken shape over time, and further, that the development discourse produces the outcomes. From this approach, came the thought that development is founded upon the idea of trusteeship and as such it attempts to depoliticise poverty due to limitations enforced on the developers themselves. Nustad sees a need for this insight to be maintained, yet more attention should be aimed towards studying how these processes are in fact embodied in specific encounters (ibid: 38). Nustad elaborates his theory with the statement that "with analytical focus on practitioners of development and the ways they construct their object through the discourse of development, the reactions of the people to be developed are neglected" (ibid: 42). Accordingly, the majority of post-development theories concern the development apparatus specifically. These theories tend to examine how development produces and regulates a reality of which it seeks to intervene, however neglects the fact that the social world, which development itself attempts to affect, is created in the image of the developers themselves. Nustad continues by stating that the majority of the work

within this field has particularly focused on the discourse of the developers and how the object to be developed is portrayed and constructed by them, the developers, therefore often neglecting the agency of those directly affected. Nustad thus believes that post-development studies should begin to examine how, in local encounters, development interventions are converted, redefined, adopted or resisted (ibid: 41). He further argues that post-development theory has been too fixated on proving that development is a homogeneous field, consequently disregarding the potentiality of development interventions that have been transformed and assigned new meaning, and in addition, that the restrictions that have been forced upon the developers' understanding of their tasks eventually undermines the entirety of the act (ibid: 44).

Post-developments criticism of development does, according to Lie (in Ziai 2007), suggest that discourse has an important part to play in the structuring of both agents and practices involved in development (ibid: 47). Within the social sciences, the concept that is discourse refers to the interrelation of meaning, practice and power. In other words, the knowledge/power structures shared between people. It refers to both written and spoken words, as well as the accumulations of social practices by writing itself into individuals and institutions and as such either becoming more or less normal for those exposed to it (ibid: 52). Lie draws upon Foucault's (1972) thoughts on discourse along with the post-development's use of such because accordingly, this relates directly to the measures of freedom assigned to individuals in discursive matters. Post-development discourse is premised on a refusal to measure reason, freedom and improvement of modernity, given that knowledge is integral in regimes of power and the context of space and time where a given discourse has developed. These regimes of knowledge and power thereby reject whether something shall be considered true or false. It is furthermore suggested by Lie, that the carriers of discourse are always governed by structuralising power discourses noticed through procedures of exclusion, rules of formation and conditions of existence. A discourse is in this sense a reality, which applies itself to those who relate to it. It creates a sense of normativity in statements and practices, where those who deviate from these norms become excluded, consequently strengthening and reproducing discursive orders. As such, discourse constitutes a system applicable to anyone who masters or wishes to master it while managing to uphold its meaning and/or validity (Lie in Ziai 2007: 52-53). As previously mentioned in this paragraph, post-development theory considers development to be both authoritarian and technocratic, practised and portrayed through a discourse, which overrides cultural variations. Development is considered a system of knowledge, technology, practice and power that orders and regulates those societies deemed under-developed. Western neo-colonial

discourse is, as suggested by Lie, one reason as to why development does not work as intended, given that it merely reproduces and preserves these uneven power structures between the Global North and the Global South. The knowledge system related to the development discourse takes shape through processes of normalisation and discursive formation. Thus, the agency of those involved constantly reproduces the discourse, which they have been shaped by (ibid: 53-54).

After Post-Development

Following Nederveen Pieterse (2000), the notion of post-development is a radical reaction to the dilemmas of development, focusing on underlying premises and motives. Accordingly, post-development begins with the assessment that it is impossible to reach a point where the majority of the world population can be considered as "*belonging to a universal governing conception of the middle-class*" (ibid: 175-176). Post-development rejects development in its totality, not only because of its results but due to its intentions, worldview and mind-set, here referring to; the imposition of science as power; the belief that development means cultural Westernisation and homogenisation; that it brings with it environmental destruction and moreover; that development thinking is the '*new religion of the West*' (ibid). Development believes in social engineering along with an ambition to construct and influence economies and societies, making it an interventionist and managerialist discipline (ibid: 182). Nederveen Pieterse seeks to demonstrate why development has become synonymous to Westernisation. One of the overarching issues, he argues, is that development discourse denies the agency of the Third World and the fact that the South also 'owns development'. Further, does the commonly used concept 'Westernisation' accordingly ignore history, and similarly does the frequently used category 'the West' not cohere, as it not only neglects historical differences between Europe and North America, but also discounts more complex evaluations of globalisation. (ibid: 178-179) The manifold ambitions to 'change the world' are today received with cynicism, which is, according to Nederveen Pieterse, among other reasons due to "*the questionable record of several development decades, doubts over social engineering and rationalist planning as exercises in authoritarianism, and over modernism and the utopian belief in the perfectibility of society"* (ibid: 187). Yet, this does accordingly not change the necessity to 'change the world', nor does it change the fact that in spite of all its flaws, development is in itself all about changing the world (ibid: 187).

It is set forth, by Nederveen Pieterse, that post-development and 'alternatives to development' are inaccurate premises. Not by means of sensibilities but as positions, given that no alternatives to development are proposed. Allegedly, post-development is misconceived in the sense that it connects development to one limited meaning, which neither matches theory nor policy. It thus replicates development's rhetoric instead of penetrating and exposing the numerous meanings of the realities embedded in it. Indeed, it contributes to collective conversations and reflections on development, hence contributing to philosophies of change yet insufficiently to politics of change. The cultural sensibilities accompanying the post-developments stance are appreciated, though they may lead to an objectification of culture, locality and/or people, by proposing a simplified understanding of globalisation as equated to homogenisation. (ibid: 187-188)

4.2 Learning Theory and Organisational Change

In this paragraph, we present the theoretical fields of Learning and Organisational Change as they have been conceptualised, applied and combined before. On this basis, we specify how we apply learning theory and organisational change as a theoretical framework for our analysis.

Learning theory has evolved from traditionally being considered relevant in educational studies, to be acknowledged as a concept that is applicable to several empirical and analytical fields. A distinction between learning theory as originally applied; examining the individual, psychological functions of the brain in a concrete learning process - and its expanded version; examining the social and interactional aspects of learning in multiple contexts - is useful for a clear analytical direction. In this study, we apply theories that explore the social, interactional aspects of learning. In particular, we employ experiential learning theory as an analytical tool to explore how experience and knowledge relates to organisations' practice and changes of practice. As previously presented in our literature review, studies that correlate learning theory and change agency in the empirical field of organisations have increased in the last decades (Elkjær 1996; Hendry 1996; Huy 2001; Murray 2002; Russ 2006; Small & Irvine 2006; Yeo 2006; Senge 2010; Yolles et. al 2011; Rouchier, Tubaro & Emery 2014; Yolles & Fink 2015). However, these articles generally study planned change in organisations, often with a focus on effectiveness and growth in the private sector, from a quite linear approach to learning. It is argued in several of these articles that engaged employees or *change agents* are necessary in order to successfully implement organisational change. In particular, Senge (2010) argues that

non-profit organisations are the necessary change agents for sustainable change. Organisations must change practice and enter unusual partnerships in order to start a sustainable revolution that crosses disciplinary boundaries between non-profit organisations and for-profit enterprises. A central part of this argument is that non-profit organisations have the will and ambitions for change, while enterprises have the economic resources and customers. However, our empirical data does not suggest that the change is carefully planned or managed by the organisation, but rather that the organisations' change of practice is an ongoing response to a broader social change of discourse and ideology. In our analysis, rather than looking at the management of planned change for the purpose of effectiveness and growth - as most studies that employ learning theory to cases of organisational change do - we will examine it the other way around and ask: Why do the organisations change practice and how does learning relate to that? Indeed, we acknowledge that with our particular choice of theory, we have already determined learning to be an explanatory variable and relevant analytical concept for the purpose of exploring organisational change.

To explore the learning process in relation to the changes in the organisations' practices we employ Kolb's theory on experiential learning as it allows an analytical focus on the social, interactional and circular aspects of learning. Kolb defines learning as: *The process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience* (Kolb, 1984: 41). This definition builds on six prepositions to learning:

1. Learning is best conceived as a continuing process, not in terms of absolute outcomes.

2. All learning is relearning: Learning is best facilitated by including, questioning and refining "old" ideas and beliefs of reality.

3. Learning requires conflicts between opposing modes of reflection, action, feeling and thinking. Conflicts, differences and disagreements drive the learning process.

4. Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world. It is not just the result of cognition, but involves all humanly functions of thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving.

5. Learning results from synergistic transactions between the person and the environment: The learner balances between dialectic processes of A) assimilating new experiences into existing concepts and B) accommodating existing concepts to new experiences.

6. Learning is the process of creating knowledge. Knowledge is socially constructed in the personal knowledge of the learner, rather than a direct transmission of pre-existing fixed ideas from others.

On the basis of these six prepositions, we form a theoretical frame for our analysis of learning in the field of organised, international volunteering; paying attention to the circular and social aspects of learning, and in particular how it is a process of experiences and reflections. In addition to the six prepositions for learning, we employ the experiential learning cycle (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) as a structure for our analysis. In combination, it serves as our theoretical basic understanding of learning as a continuous, non-linear, social and conflicting process in which individuals must question and reconsider their own as well as others' ideas and beliefs of reality. In our analysis, we will pay less attention to individual learning styles as we consider our empirical data to represent a very limited source for knowledge on learning styles. Nonetheless, it is deemed important to stress that we do consider the aspect of individual motivation and agency as being a relevant variable for organisational learning and change in the field of international volunteering. We consider the field of organised, international volunteering to exemplify a learning space in which volunteers, employees, partners and organisations are all relevant learning subjects to study. In this particular study, we are interested in employees' reflections and experiences of working with volunteers.

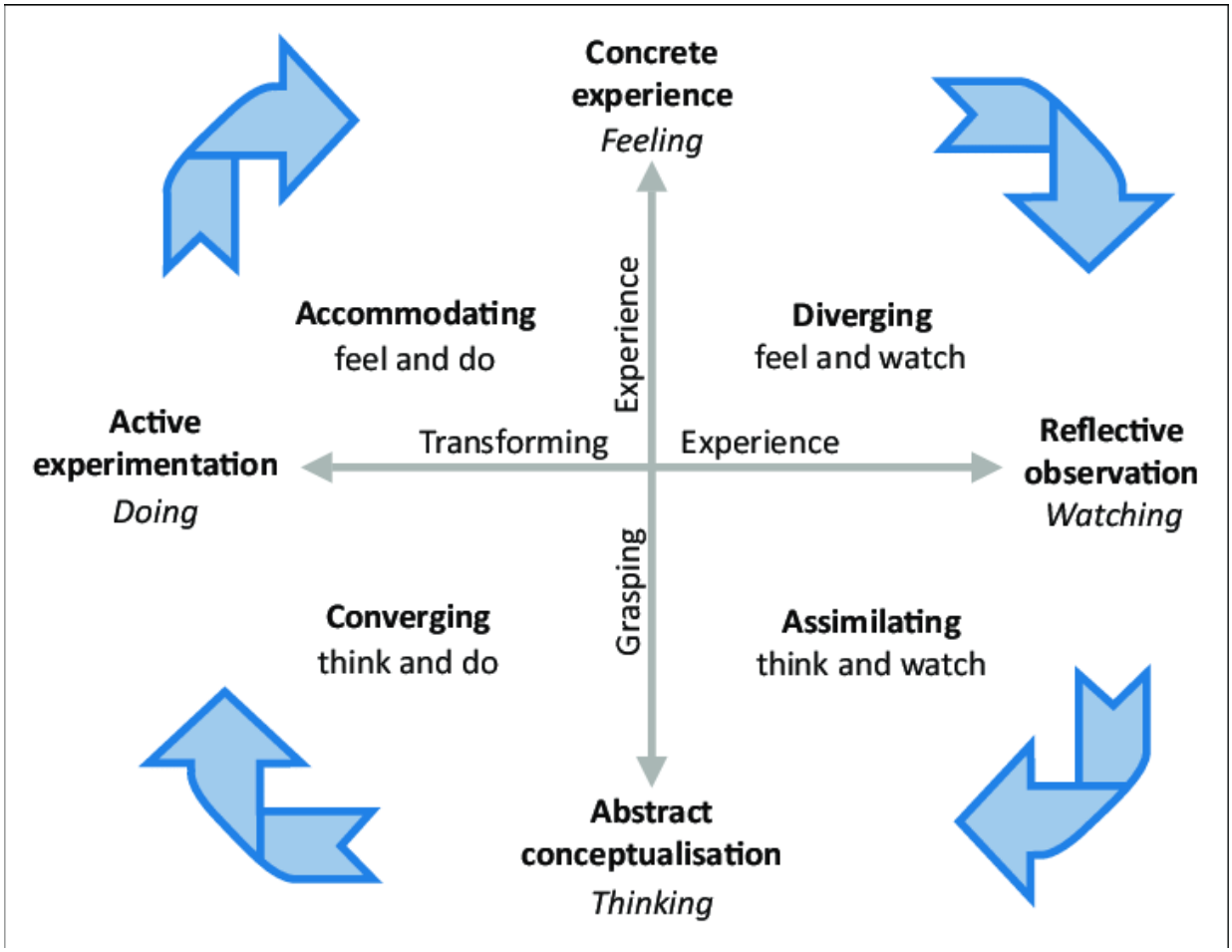

Figure 3: Kolb's experiential learning cycle and learning styles (Van der Horst & Albertyn 2018, adapted from Kolb 1984)

Kolb's experiential learning cycle is considered a useful tool for our analysis as it presents the concrete elements and stages in the process of experiential learning. It illustrates the experiential learning process and its stages as a cycle, in which learning subjects touch all the stages of experiencing, reflecting, acting and reacting. In the cycle, concrete experiences form the basis for observations and reflections. These reflections are then assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts. These abstract concepts then cause new implications for action. As the fourth stage of action in the learning cycle, these implications can be actively tested through experimentation and as such guide new, concrete experiences. Elaborated, only if this fourth stage of action is activated - only if these implications from former experiences and reflections are tested in new experiences, i.e. integrated in future practice - the learning process can be considered a learning cycle. With this theoretical understanding, learning is not considered an absolute to be achieved or acquired, but rather a continuous process of experiencing, reflecting,

conceptualising and experimenting. Added to this, we will emphasise how this understanding liberates the individual learning subject to make mistakes in the learning process, and adjust or refine experiences in the following loops of the learning cycle. However, we will also emphasise how this requires a learning space that is tolerant towards mistakes and process. In figure 4, we have applied our particular empirical field of international volunteer organisations into the experiential learning cycle. As an adjustment from figure 3, we have chosen to include the transitions and explanations between the four stages of the learning cycle.

Figure 4: Experiential learning in international volunteer organisations

4.3 Post-Development Theory and Learning Theory

In this paragraph, we present and motivate the particular way we combine and apply Post-development Theory and Learning Theory to the empirical field of international volunteering.

International volunteering is in practice often directly linked to development projects. Unaccompanied and in its most simple form post-development theory will argue that international volunteering is maintaining unequal power structures and relations between the Global North and the Global South through the use of misleading ideas and narratives of 'doing good', 'helping', and contributing to a necessary 'good development'. Following post-development theory, international volunteering should rather be understood as a continuation of a development policy that ensures the domination and privileges of the Global North. Ideas of 'doing good' and 'good development' are dependent on knowledge and - following experiential learning theory - experience. Unaccompanied and in its most simple form, experiential learning theory will argue that agents learn from experience. As such, volunteers' and organisations' intentions, motivations and experiences of 'doing good' ensure that the very ideas of 'good' are developing according to knowledge and experience, and may lead to changes of practice. As such, volunteers and organisations may serve as change agents in a field that is criticised by its structural roots in development policies, which is claimed to continuously favour the interests of the Global North. The phenomenon of international volunteering is deeply influenced by discursive ideas of 'doing good' and 'good will', the commonly noticed altruistic volunteer motivation to contribute to change or 'good development'. As any other social construction, these discursive ideas have evolved over time and space and are inextricably connected to power and 'regimes of truth' (Foucault 1998). As groundwork for this study, we consider these ideas and the evolution of them as a product of history of international relations and development. Development theory and practice is fundamentally built on the idea that the world must develop and implicitly embedded in this, is the idea and understanding of linear development towards the standards of the Global North. From a research position and for the purpose of this study, we will however attempt to remain critical towards the understanding of (learning) processes as linear; controlled by a dominant power and with a predetermined end result. Rather, and reflected in our choice of theories, we consider these processes as nonlinear, continuous and social. As such, our study is placed within the critical academic field of post-development. However, we attempt to nuance the critical and quite determinative understanding of international relations from post-development theory by asking how experiential learning and reflective ideas of 'doing good' can contribute to social and

organisational change in the field of international volunteering - both within the individual volunteer and employee, within the organisation, and within the market for international volunteering. Simultaneously, we attempt to nuance the liberal understanding of individuals' capability to learn and change practice in a field deeply rooted in fixed structures of power. As such, our particular combination of theories form the basis of an analysis that debates structure and agency, continuations of post-development practices and changes through learning.

5.0 Analysis

Motivation for the analysis

In this paragraph, we will motivate the particular way we apply and combine theory and how we apply the analytical concepts to our empirical data. The three sets of empirical data presents one critical, knowledge-exchanging consultant group and two volunteer programmes, all of them representing change agents in the field. Critical arguments from both our theory and empirical data will be discussed in the analysis considering the organisations' practice, their experience of working with volunteers and their change of practice. By introducing the theoretical and empirical critical arguments against international volunteering, we attempt to explore how agents in the field respond to the critical arguments and the requests for change in their organisational practice. In this study, we are working with the assumption that the respective agents are already working actively towards sustainable and ethical practices. From our reading of the two empirical data sets of volunteer programmes, it is clear that the organisations aim to 'do good'. Both of the organisations have concrete criteria for their practices including their programmes, partners and volunteers. Moreover, our informants acknowledge that the criteria for their practices are often difficult to comply with and accomplish. Both of these aspects affirm that the organisational practice is by no means arbitrary, but based on reflective ideas and intentions of 'doing good'. However, it can be discussed whether these ideas of 'good practice' are based on rationality or ideology - and in this, whether they are determined by structure or agency - and if it is even meaningful to make a clear division like that. We apply post-development theory and learning theory to the empirical cases of organisational practice in international volunteer programmes to shed light upon the structures that have formed the development sector, as well as the change agents that are nonetheless present; experiencing, reflecting, learning and acting to 'do good'. Our empirical data sets represent only a selection of the existing Danish-international volunteer programmes. The interest of the two organisations to contribute with knowledge suggests that our selection of cases represent some of the more progressive and receptive agents in the field. However, critical voices in the empirical field suggest that there is plenty of room for improvements in the practices of those who organise international volunteering, even those who have interest in contributing to a sustainable change. One of these critical voices towards international volunteering is NGO PILOT, a Danish association that aims to create awareness on the complex issues in the Danish-international volunteer tourism market. The concrete, empirical critical arguments against international volunteering will be unfolded in the analysis.

5.1 Chapter 1: Introducing the criticism towards international volunteering

In this paragraph, we introduce the criticism towards international volunteering, empirically presented by the association NGO PILOT. Our empirical data from NGO PILOT links theory and practice, and in our analysis, their arguments are employed correspondingly to theoretical arguments: We use the critical arguments to discuss the concrete practice and change of practice in two cases of volunteer programmes.

Through education and consultancy of agents on the market, collection of information and political engagement, NGO PILOT seeks to initiate and implement sustainable change in the Danish market for international volunteering (Appendix C2). Online, empirical data collected from their website present their conceptualisation of the problem and establishes some of the central critical arguments against the international volunteer market. According to NGO PILOT, the main issue is the common lack of knowledge and awareness about the problems embedded in the market for volunteering:

> *International volunteering is generally perceived as being inherently good. Unfortunately that is not the reality, and travelling abroad to do voluntary work can lead to a wide range of serious and damaging implications* (...) *It is a great problem with several different issues, which makes it difficult to apprehend. But in the general public, volunteering has good resonance - and to travel abroad to help others is a part of our history as white people. This has resulted in an ignorance and lack of understanding of the problems embedded in the market, one's own position in the market as well as the need to change the market* (Appendix C2).

NGO PILOT claims that the embedded, neglected problems include that international volunteering often harms local communities, contributes to global inequality and is fundamentally unsustainable. NGO PILOT explains online that these problems exist as a consequence of the particular structure of the market, which is unregulated and demand-driven, combined with a low transparency in the NGO sector:

> *The high demand on volunteer work abroad and the simultaneous low transparency in the sector of NGOs makes it easy for small groups and companies to launch new unreliable projects that work towards their own agenda rather than for a local or national problem. With transparency, the volunteer would more easily be able to ensure that the project is sustainable. Exactly because the market for volunteering is an*

> *unregulated market with no clear guidelines, there is great confusion of what international volunteering is or what consequences it has.* (Appendix C2)

Another central argument against international volunteering is that regardless of the type of retailer or organisation, the volunteer programme is a service sold to the volunteer. Or as NGO PILOT formulates it online: "When you volunteer abroad through a travel agency, you pay the agency, thus you are their customer and above all they will work to please you." (Appendix C2). As such, the problem is double-sided. It is both a question of a market structure that legitimises damaging and unsustainable practices, but also a question of how agents, the organisers of international volunteering, practically respond to these structures. The empirical data collected through interview with Eva, representing NGO PILOT, elaborates on the complexities of the travel market for volunteers as being a structural problem:

> *If a travel agency sent out 100 volunteers a year and 25 of these return to say "I think there is a problem with this way we are volunteering because we did not help or we had a bad influence on the local community". As long as more go, they will win (...) Because if they were to take the time to listen to every single one of these voices and seriously consider a change of practice that would just take a lot of resources compared to what they can earn from organising a volunteer stay. I mean, that is 20.000 (DKK) or something, right. So it is a lot about finances* (Appendix C, ll. 9-21).

NGO PILOT builds their arguments on the basis that the market for international volunteering - as any other market - is driven by the economic incentives of demand. One argument is that agencies are more likely to prioritise resources on meeting the demands of their customers, in this case to organise international volunteering than on evaluations of their practice and the social sustainability of it, which might lead to unethical practices. Another argument is that the service is offered on a competitive market:

> *Because it is a competition. If a travel agency is selling these other types of trips, like Kilroy for example, and other agencies do not organise these travels for volunteers, then because of the competition they have to do it. And then they do not have the time to understand or grasp these critical things* (Appendix C, ll. 34-37).

Building on the argument of a competitive market, it is emphasised that the possibilities of international volunteer programmes are defined and limited by time and money. As noticed through our initial empirical research, the field of organised, international volunteering appears

to be divided into two groups of agents: On one side, those who have interest in contributing to critical research and on the other side, those who do not - possibly because they prioritise the economic sustainability of their business (see method: Exploring the empirical field). Similarly noticed, and expressed with optimism in their online presentation, NGO PILOT argues: "Fortunately, we are beginning to see an increasing awareness and criticism of this" (Appendix C2). This aspect is elaborated in the empirical data collected through interview:

> *They are pressured by some external forces telling them that if they are smart, they are changing it now because if not, they will meet problems later. And the same story goes for profit corporations in general. I mean, at some point it is going to be difficult to only think about money* (...) *But I think, in the heart of the people working with it, they are actually happy that they can change it now. I do not believe they are just thinking about money or cheating people, it is not about that. It is just structured in a way that makes it really difficult to circumvent* (Appendix C, ll. 23-33).

It is predicted that a general demand for sustainable practices will force both non-profit and for-profit providers in the market of international volunteering to change practice in order to 'keep up'. However, it is also predicted to be difficult even for those with the *heart* or will to change, because it is *structured in a way that makes it difficult to circumvent*. All of these arguments together motivate the concrete mission of NGO PILOT. As the practice of sending volunteers abroad is a service sold at a competitive market and driven by demand, the association attempts to change these demands through a bottom-up management:

> *That is why we are trying to generate this demand from the individual. We are talking about these problems in the market and we are trying to get people to start a debate and be self-reflective. And we are not saying that people should not volunteer abroad, but we do not encourage it either. It is just crucial to get some information before doing it* (Appendix C, ll. 64-69).

Elaborated, the mission and vision of NGO PILOT is to generate awareness and demand from the customers of international volunteering and through that, force the suppliers and organisers of international volunteering to implement more sustainable and ethical practices. The concrete practices that NGO PILOT emphasises to be the most critical in the field of international volunteering are presented as three interconnected problems: One is that the volunteers might be unqualified to do the work they do and often only stay on projects for a short period, both of which harms the local projects and subjects as it takes up resources for training, and vulnerable

subjects such as children might get attached. Another is that the volunteers will focus on the problems that the organisation presents to them, which do not necessarily align with the wishes, methods or needs of the local community - in worst cases, the volunteers end up in situations where they solve problems that have been set up for the sake of the volunteers. A third is that the volunteers' impact on the local community causes a continuous need for the volunteers, even in cases where the volunteers are unqualified. This reproduces a saviour complex as it constructs an unsustainable dependency on the volunteers and harms the independence and sustainability of the local community (Appendix C2).

In this first chapter of our analysis, we have introduced the general criticism towards the phenomenon of international volunteering, as well as the concrete organisational practices in the field that are being criticised by the association NGO PILOT. The criticism is particularly focused on the lack of knowledge and understanding of the negative impacts international volunteering can cause. A concrete critical argument is that the particular structure of the market, being unregulated and demand-driven, is causing multiple problems in the practice of organising international volunteering. NGO PILOT claims that the particular market structure legitimises damaging and unsustainable practices. However, in our following analysis we find that agents in the field, the organisers of international volunteering, have different ways of responding to the structures and accommodating criticism towards their practice. In the following analysis, we incorporate the concrete critical arguments when we explore the organisations' practice, experiences of working with volunteers, and change of practice in two international volunteer programmes.

5.2 Chapter 2: The organisations' practice

In this chapter of the analysis, we explore the empirical data presenting the organisations' practices, often also referred to as what they 'usually do', through a particular analytical focus on the components of practice, awareness and knowledge, ideology and rationality. The analytical components enable us to analyse the empirical data through an exploratory approach, in particular with our chosen theories of post-development and learning theory.

When we apply post-development theory, a focus on practice motivates us to analyse how the organisational practices have developed over time and if continuations of a post-colonial practice appear, while a focus on awareness motivates us to explore the reflectiveness in the organisations' practice. Further, the focus on knowledge motivates us to explore post-colonial aspects of 'superior knowledge', while a focus on normality opens up for a debate on truisms in the field, as well as norms for 'good practice', 'good development' etc. We explore these aspects through the perception that the organisational practice may be influenced by both ideology and rationality. Similarly, we consider the organisations' choice of practice to be based on both ideology and knowledge. When we apply learning theory, we are equipped to explore the intersection between knowledge, rationality and ideology in relation to the organisational practice. In particular, experiential learning theory forms the basis for our analysis of how experiences lead to new socially produced, experiential knowledge, which may lead to changes of practice. In addition, learning as a theoretical framework opens up for a constructivist debate on how norms and normative ideas of 'good' are socially constructed, learned and integrated as truisms in practice over time.

Linguistic presentations of the volunteer programmes: A balancing strategy

One of our empirical cases, Go Global presents their volunteer programme online:

> *Common for our volunteer travels is that you never know for sure what will happen. This is what makes the trip exciting! However, you will with certainty get a lot of new friends, and many choose to continue travelling together afterwards. You will get professional preparation in advance of your travel, and you will become part of DanChurchAid's campaign and communication team, both when you are abroad and when you return. In that way, you will also get the opportunity to write new competences on your résumé. It is important to emphasise that every trip is different and filled with both exciting and unforeseen experiences - that is what makes your trip unique.* (Appendix A2).

In the online presentation of their programme, Go Global emphasises several times that the volunteers are not going to know what will happen during their travels. However, Go Global guarantees exciting life experiences, new friends, new personal skills and insights. In the presentation of their programme, it is significant that the organisation attempts to balance between multiple aspects of their organisational practice: They accommodate both the traveller's expectations to new experiences, the buyer's demand of a low price, the idealist' ambitions to make a change, and the youth's eagerness for making new friends and gaining new skills. Simultaneously, the organisation averts the risk of not complying to all of these expectations in an unpredictable reality. The organisation's solution to the issue of unpredictability appears to present the travel programme as an exciting life experience, however on rather unspecified terms.

Alongside with pictures of volunteers, children and workers in local communities, our second empirical case, Global Contact, presents their volunteer programme online as following:

> *Come closer to the World. And yourself! A trip that never ends. We make the world smaller. And the perspectives bigger. Travel along with others. If you want to make a difference, you need good preparation. We will ensure that. We are a humanitarian organisation and not a company. Our profit goes to development work. We have been sending people out in the world since 1946 (...) We have a long history of experience sending volunteers abroad and we know how important good preparation is. It gives both you and the organisation you are working with a much better experience. All volunteers we are sending out begins with a four week local, educational stay. We have tailored together a programme that gives you the tools to work as a volunteer. The programme is a combination of education, excursions and experiences. This will give you a soft landing in the region before you are going to live and work locally.* (Appendix B2)

In the online presentation of their programme, Global Contact emphasise their many years of experience organising international volunteering, and as such they establish their organisational practice as accountable, trustworthy and sustainable. The organisation depicts themselves as having the proper skills and knowledge to sufficiently teach and prepare 'the good volunteer', which is by them deemed necessary in order to achieve the often noticed volunteer ambition of 'making a difference'. Further - and similar to the practice of Go Global - Global Contact draws on multiple aspects to attract and please potential 'customers': Safety, new knowledge,

new acquaintances and exciting adventures. Paying for a volunteer stay 'package' with the organisation entails a *soft-landing* at a local platform with a tailored four-week educational programme, where the volunteers learn about local culture and language and gain new skills while surrounded by new friends, before eventually being able to *make a difference* and begin the *trip that never ends*. This notion of a never ending trip can be interpreted as a way to insinuate that the experiences, knowledge and skills gained from these stays, will influence and affect the individual volunteer's life and perspective in various aspects onwards.

Challenging the discourse of 'saving the world': Balancing ideology and reality

In the data collected through interviews, the particular practice of the volunteer programme Go Global is presented by our informant Jesper as a pragmatic choice, almost like a truism:

> *Then there are of course this like, you cannot really avoid having an informative or observant kind of approach to the projects. Because that is also a quite central part of the way we approach it. It is difficult to carry this out one hundred percent in practice, but we attempt not to do anything that we would not have done otherwise. We will not do anything that has been created just for the purpose of the volunteers having something to do. We attempt to do something which supports the programmes we already have.* (Appendix A: 51-66).

The practice of Go Global is to support pre-existing programmes and partners by the observatory work of volunteers. It is presented as an indisputable part of the organisational practice to *not do anything that we would not have done otherwise*. This serves as a direct counter statement to the empirical and theoretical criticism of a practice where volunteer projects are determined by demands and expectations from volunteers. Our informant emphasises that this approach *can not really be avoided*. This is connected to the fact that the organisation does not want volunteers to carry out critical work on the projects, but rather to observe and support the existing projects. This particular practice is a reflective choice, which becomes clear, as the practice is problematised as *difficult to perform one hundred percent in practice*. The choice of practice is presented as a compromise between ideological efforts of 'doing good' and experiences from working with volunteers in an unpredictable reality:

> *Sometimes that can be a bit difficult, as it is hard to explain to people at home what will happen. And that can change a lot. Like for instance, if an earth slide happens we won't be able to visit that specific partner, and then we are forced to do something different.*

> *And it can be a bit tricky to explain, that you are not going out there to save the world.* (Appendix A: 85-89).

It is presented as problematic for the organisation to present their programmes in clear terms, as the programme can not be organised definitively. Seemingly, our informant experiences that the organisation is not always able to comply with the expectations of volunteers. Moreover, it appears that the organisation attempts to challenge the development-discourse by emphasising that volunteers' expectations to *save the world* will not be met. The compromise between ideology and pragmatism in the organisation's practice can be further analysed upon through a structural, market-oriented approach: As the organisation also functions as a travel agency, this practice has complications for their accountability towards their customers' expectations. The organisation can not assure their customers what will happen - only that they *are not going out there to save the world*. Additionally, as a development organisation, they need to reassure donors that they have achieved development for their economic funding (Nustad in Ziai 2007: 38). On the other hand, as a non-profit humanitarian organisation, this practice of balancing may in fact increase their accountability. It helps to ensure that the volunteer programme is not driven by economic profit incentives, but based on a trustworthy and realistic approach to humanitarian development work. Elaborated, the need to balance between ideology and pragmatism in the organisation's practice is closely linked to the structural framework of the organisation, acting both as a de-facto travel agency, a development organisation and a humanitarian organisation. To comply with this, the organisation needs a balancing strategy towards the volunteers' expectations.

Active questioning of volunteers' motivations through preparatory education

The complications of this balancing strategy can be unfolded with reflections from Caroline, our informant representing the volunteer programme Global Contact. As part of the organisation's practice, she is responsible for the administrative work when new volunteers sign up, preparation of volunteers, continuous supportive communication with volunteers abroad and, in addition, evaluations with former volunteers (Appendix B, ll. 33-39). From her experience as well, the volunteers are often motivated by notions of wanting to *make a difference* or to *help somebody*. The organisation is working actively with these motivations in their preparation of volunteers:

> *The volunteers often hope to make a difference and to help somebody. These hopes provide a good reason to discuss this. Because it is really important to have a balanced idea of what kind of difference they can make.* (Appendix B, ll. 303-305)

The expectations and desires to 'do good' for someone in need of help, carries connotations to the much criticised post-colonial and development discourses. The aspect of altruism is generally noticed as being a central motivational factor for doing international volunteer work. Following post-development theory, the altruistic approach creates a dichotomy of 'us and them', which is claimed to do more harm than good as it ultimately incapacitates 'them'. By simply presuming that 'they' need 'our' help, knowledge and skills in order to escape a state of 'underdevelopment', the perception of 'development' has in this sense become a common homogenised and culturally westernised perception of the equivalent to a 'good life'. It is implicitly taken for granted that these societies and populations desire a different way of life, and as such, these discourses are in fact disempowering (Ziai & Escobar, 2007). This aspect will be further elaborated upon in Chapter 3 and 4 of the analysis.

Volunteers' expectations of 'doing good' are further clarified by Caroline when asked about the structure and educational content of the volunteers' introductory courses hosted by the organisation. Caroline only attends these courses briefly, mainly to discuss the volunteers' expectations, hopes and fears which is further explored in Chapter 3 of our analysis. Nonetheless, she does articulate some knowledge on how it used to be, given that she did her internship in that team before being employed as a volunteer coordinator (Appendix B2, ll. 270-281). She emphasises that under 'normal' circumstances, when introductory courses were still held and volunteers were still sent abroad, a specific team would be in charge of developing and preparing these programmes along with the educational content.

> *It is the national team that is managing the courses. We have a full organisational unit for that. Again, it is something we used to have. Obviously, we do not have any introductory courses right now, but usually we have someone who develops the educational content of the introductory course.* (Appendix B, ll. 272-275)

As accentuated in the presentation of Global Contact's online content (Appendix B2) earlier in this chapter, the organisation clarifies how they ensure "good" volunteer practices and experiences by means of educational preparation. Aside from the introductory course, the organisation prepares the volunteers through four weeks of practical introduction to volunteer work and the local region in question at one of the local educational platforms. Caroline

explains that the educational content at these platforms are primarily structured and organised by the local staff employed at the individual platforms, although, as she elaborates:

> *I mean, we do have one person here that ensures a streamlining of the programmes. Because, it is in our interest that the programmes follow a red thread. At least that the volunteers roughly gain the same from their stay. I mean, we do want to have an influence on the substance, but in the end it is up to the particular platform to decide.* (Appendix B, ll. 400-404)

Assumable, given that the educational platforms are widely spread and located in different parts of the world, the educational material and content differ accordingly from platform to platform. Hence, the knowledge, skills and practical experiences gained from these stays will similarly vary. However, the concrete educational practice and purpose of these preparatory educational stays are akin, and will be further unfolded and elaborated upon in Chapter 3. The organisation's choice of educating and introducing the volunteers to their ethical principles is based on experience, referred to as *what they know works*:

> *We have a lot of experience sending volunteers abroad, and we do know what works and what does not. But mostly, we know what works for the volunteers (...) our general ethical principles are based on the experience we have and the things we already do*. (...) *I also think that at some point we felt like a lot of criticism was pointed towards our programmes, but we came to realise that we are actually doing a lot of things, it was just not said or written anywhere. So these general ethical principles are also supposed to manifest that we have actually been aware of some of these things all along.* (Appendix B, ll. 110-120)

Thus, a significant part of the organisational practice is to ensure the ethical accountability of the organisation through external communication, such as a manifest of ethical guidelines. It further reveals how the organisation has learned from concrete experience and refined their methods as a response to external demands and requests.

The organisations' intentions, experiences and possibilities for learning

Experiential learning theory proves to be relevant to the organisational practice in at least two aspects: One is that the organisations are learning from their own experiences of working with volunteers, another is that the organisations appear to be actively and reflectively working with experiential learning of their volunteers. Following experiential learning theory, all learning is

relearning. The theory claims that "learning is best facilitated by including, questioning and refining old ideas and beliefs of reality" (Kolb, 1984: 194). In relation to this, we understand the organisations' practices to be consciously chosen and built on knowledge from experience, however simultaneously - and possibly less consciously - influenced by structurally determined norms and ideas of 'good practice'. Both of the organisations claim to have a broad and deep understanding of their practice based on their experience of sending volunteers abroad - one of them since 1946. The organisations' long history of experience is presented as a strength that increases their legitimacy and reliability. We will argue that a long existence and experience in the field may also lead to another consequence: Over time, it becomes increasingly more difficult to surmount and challenge ingrained habits, moreover to change your own practice, mind-set and attitude of how to do things. As the practice of the organisations and their programmes are rooted in the historical phenomenon of development work, the practical knowledge might be too 'deep' to withdraw from. The organisations have, so to speak, inherited a particular approach to their practice from development work. Parts of the academic literature on learning in organisations suggests unlearning to be part of the learning process (Ege, Esen & Asik 2019). As such, it is argued that all learning subjects - as well as learning organisations - must unlearn themselves how to do things. In the most radical form, this means that the organisations must go back to the drawing board, forget their year-long experience and start from scratch. The organisations need to fundamentally question themselves whether they can defend their practice of sending volunteers abroad and ultimately, whether they should in fact stop this practice due to ethical (un)sustainability. In a more moderate form, the organisations must question their own intentions and beliefs of 'doing good', and adjust their practice based on deep reflections of their practice. The organisations' practice may both be rationally based on knowledge and experience and, at the very same time, ideologically based on beliefs and intentions. Indeed, our use of post-development and experiential learning theory challenges an understanding of rationality/ideology and knowledge/beliefs as distinct, detachable concepts.

In this chapter of analysis, we have explored the organisational practice of the two volunteer programmes, Go Global and Global Contact, as presented and reflected by our informants. We have critically assessed the structure and content of the volunteer programmes, particularly regarding its educational functions and intentions of 'doing good'. We have gained an insight into the underlying considerations of the organisations' choice of practice, and through this, we found that the organisations' practices are embedded with truisms: Circumstances that are taken

for granted as an internal logic for the organisational practice. Occasionally, the reflections of our informants occur as a justification for the organisational practice, both internally and externally. It appears that a significant part of the organisational practice is to ensure ethical accountability through external communication. From this, it can be concluded that the organisations intend to 'do good' with their volunteer programmes, and that the organisations' choice of practice is not arbitrary, but based on reflective ideas of 'good'. In addition, it appears that the theoretical debate and criticism towards international volunteering is integrated as part of the organisational practice. Our analytical findings should be understood in the light of our theoretical preconceptions: Both in our collection and analysis of data, it has been questioned if the organisational practice is merely a continuation of postcolonial practices. As such, the organisational practice is both reflected upon and presented by our informants as a response to these preconceptions.

5.3 Chapter 3: The organisation's experiences of working with volunteers

In this chapter of the analysis, we look into how the organisations are learning from concrete experiences with and from volunteers. We explore how the organisations work actively with volunteers' perceptions and motivations: How the organisations present their aims and intentions for their practice of working with volunteers in partner projects, and which reflections lie behind their decision making processes. Significantly, we explore how agents of good will and motivation, (i.e. the organisers of volunteer programmes) actively reflect upon the possibilities and limitations of their change agency (i.e. the structures embedded in the development field that they are operating in), yet simultaneously happen to discursively reproduce the very same structure. We unfold the empirical data presenting how organisations are working with volunteers through a particular analytical focus on the components of motivation, engagement, good will, intentions and consequences. From the representatives' reflections on how the organisations are working with volunteers aspects such as good intentions and motivations, and reflections of potential negative consequences were frequently brought up, and will be unfolded in the following. In addition, we pay attention to elements of education, assimilation and internalisation of knowledge and practice. The organisations' experiences of working with volunteers are analysed as a learning process in which both organisations and volunteers are relevant learning subjects.

Intentions and purposes: Introducing the discourse of 'good will'

As noticed in the following, an aim for Go Global is to expand volunteers' worldview and to challenge a somewhat governing perception that 'they' need 'our' help.

> *In the meet, that is the cultural meet, it is just as much about getting the young people to realise that the world is much bigger than they think it is. But also to realise that they are not going out to save anyone, and that there are in fact some incredibly cool people in Malawi that are really capable, sometimes more so than themselves, but who live under some structural circumstances that makes them dependent on help. From us, from the government and from their local communities.* (Appendix A, ll. 40-45)

From this statement, conflicting or arbitrary narratives can be interpreted: Firstly, it appears that Go Global do indeed aim to challenge the idea of superiority/inferiority, distancing themselves from an otherwise common development-discursive tendency, by teaching the volunteers that the people they will meet through the partner projects are not necessarily in need of 'our' help nor saviour. The approach challenges the normative perception of the Global

South as underdeveloped, or in other words, as inferior societies in need of help and saviour. The organisation aims to challenge this discourse by giving the volunteers concrete experiences of a *different reality* through personal engagement and participation in local development projects. Through first-hand experiences, the volunteers are supposed to realise that the local communities are capable and knowledgeable. However, and in contradiction, our informant does simultaneously articulate that the local communities are *dependent on help from us* due to *structural circumstances*. Perhaps unintentionally, the statement reproduces a development discursive way of thinking and understanding: 'them' as in need of 'our' help in order to combat limiting structures, hence the obstacles hindering 'them' from becoming developed like 'us'. Exactly this unintentionality is a central part of our understanding of altruism in international volunteering: Volunteers and organisations intend to use their agency to change what they consider wrong or unfair, but with their 'good' intentions and actions, they risk reproducing the exact same structure they aim to change. It can be discussed whether the good intentions and attempts to 'do good' make up for the potentially harmful consequences. As part of a learning process, it can be argued that agents must try and fail in order to gain new insights and change perspective. Here, experiential learning proves relevant both in the context of organisations as well as volunteers, as it appears that experiential learning is an integrated part of the organisation's practice of working with volunteers: The organisation strives to challenge the volunteers' preconceptions of others as inferior, and their self-positioning as superior; their so called *saviour-complex*. As a concrete strategy to do this, the organisation involves volunteers in local development projects. Reflections on this practice elaborates on how the organisation attempts to challenge the volunteers' perception through experiences of a different reality:

> *You really get to see some of the problems that are present when doing development work: You come to better understand why sometimes, why things take time, (...) why the mentality is different, the dynamics different. So you are really confronted with this reality of development work, and I find that to be extremely strong and really cool, and it is a huge journey these young people go through, which is really powerful.* (Appendix A, ll. 181-187)

The organisation provides the volunteers with bodily experiences of a different reality, i.e. the local reality of development work. In this local reality of development work, *mentality* and *dynamics* are different. As such, it is acknowledged that the local communities have knowledge and skills which may differ from what is considered well known to the volunteers but that the

different set of knowledge and skills do not mean lack of abilities. It is argued that the volunteers go through a personal journey in the confrontations with these different realities. The approach of bringing young people abroad to visit these countries is multifaceted, and we suggest that fairly different intentions and purposes are present. Go Global aims to educate their volunteers to become more culturally and globally aware, by means of showing them a different way of living and the premises of these different realities. However, the statement also carries some problematic aspects with it. By explicitly stating that the local communities have different mentalities, different dynamics and that things move at a slower pace, and furthermore, by directly connecting this to the issues or hindrances for development work, a dichotomy of 'us' and 'them' is implicitly reinforced. The organisation teaches the volunteers to be patient, to understand and tolerate the local community and its premises. In line with the development discourse, it carries the risk of implicitly categorising the local communities as deviant and inferior.

Evolution of the volunteer role: From practical to political

Go Global has yet another intention with the involvement of volunteers in local development projects, emphasised by our informant to be the most important aspect of the organisation's practice and function. Operating as a DANIDA funded project, the primary function of the volunteer programme is related to the organisation's awareness raising work:

> *It is our obligation as part of DANIDA to raise awareness within the Danish population. That is the clear framework set by DANIDA. Go Global is one of the organisational tools to do that, because, especially when it comes to young people, it needs to be approached differently. And then, it is a good way to give them an experience for life and to support their intercultural learning.* (Appendix A, ll. 385-394)

As unfolded, an integrated part of the organisation's practical function as a DANIDA development partner is to raise awareness. However, the organisation is free to choose the method of doing so. Apparently, based on their practical experience, the organisation has learned that a good method for raising awareness of development work among young people is to give them concrete, bodily experiences with development work themselves. As such, the experiences and intercultural learning of volunteers have come to be a significant part of the programme's basis for existence. Our informant elaborates on an *evolution* in the organisation's practice of working with volunteers' roles in local development projects:

> *There is an evolution in the available projects that aim towards advocacy and political changes and that are less physically grounded. And that has been our main approach to it. So that is an on-going issue (...) We are trying to adjust to it, but the collection of things we know really works has become smaller. Ten years ago, it was easier to send them out to work with a partner in the health care sector. That made it easier to create a position for the volunteers where they thought "now I will be working with this and I'll have this practical role in it"* (Appendix A, ll. 998-1010).

Over time, the volunteer programme has gone through a change according to ethical norms and ideas of good practice. The organisation has shifted from an approach that gave the volunteers a practical role in partner projects to an approach that accommodates political and structural conflicts in the local communities. This particular shift is presented as an *issue*, which complicates the practice and decreases the *collection of things* they know is working. The informants elaborate on how the shift complicates the practice of organising volunteers, as it allegedly makes it "difficult for volunteers to feel that they are on board" (Appendix A, ll. 1016-1020). However, the organisation has found a practice that combines the practical approach to volunteers' work with the political focus, specifically through a partner project where olive trees are planted in Palestine to avoid Israeli acts of land grabbing (Appendix A, ll. 1020-1023). In this context, it is presented how volunteers' hand-on experiences with development work abroad can potentially benefit the organisation's awareness-raising work in the future, by recruiting the volunteers to support and promote the work of the organisation once returned to Denmark. Keeping the volunteers within the organisation is explained to be of great priority to the organisation and important for their ability to continuously carry out development work. Thus, it is something that Go Global spends a lot of time and resources on (Appendix A, ll. 856-866). This is further supported and reflected in the following:

> *There is the potentiality that the young people will actually comprehend and take home what we anticipate for them. And that supports the project, which is really important* (...) *The most important thing for us is actually to make sure that they understand the work that we do, so that they can go home and tell others about it. To us that is the difference.* (Appendix A, ll. 1033-1045)

The statement reveals that the organisation, through their practice, aims to provide insight and disseminate knowledge for and through the volunteers. This mirrors the fact that the organisation is obliged to carry out awareness-raising work in Denmark in order to receive

economic support from DANIDA, the Danish International Development Agency (Appendix A, ll. 385-387). Go Global is economically supported as an advocacy project, since the volunteers are supposed to observe, engage in and advocate for the local partner projects. As such, the organisation depends on the continuous work and engagement from their volunteers in Denmark.

Ensuring the programmes' legitimacy

Our informant from Go Global distances himself and the programme from a practice where economic incentives motivates the organisation to send volunteers abroad. It appears that the organisation favour quality over quantity in their practice of sending volunteers abroad, when our informant emphasises that a large group of volunteers for them mean 30 people in a season and they contrast their own programme to other programmes in the market, which send out several hundred volunteers each year. In this context it is further emphasised how, unlike other volunteer programmes, Go Global do not receive state funding per volunteer they send abroad:

> *Yeah well, for instance, MS[22] receives two and a half thousand per volunteer abroad, I think, which goes directly to their work. And because of how the programmes are constructed here in Folkekirkens Nødhjælp, we simply do not receive anything. So therefore it is not an, what can you say, incentive for us to send a lot of volunteers out.* (Appendix A, ll. 870-874)

The particular way Go Global programmes are constructed independently from economic incentives is proudly presented as unique organisational practice. The disassociation from other practices represents itself as a point in our empirical data, and reoccurs both within each and across sets of data representing the two organisations. As previously presented, it is of great value for Go Global to accommodate volunteers' interests and maintain their involvement and commitment with the organisation. In this context, it is similarly emphasised how their practice distinguishes from other organisations' practice, reflected in the following:

> *On the surface it looks similar, but it is not (...) I think there is a clear difference between whether you profit financially or not. And then it is also just the fact that we structure it differently. For instance with MS having platforms, a concept that makes a lot of sense, it is just really different from how we approach it. Like this whole aspect of*

[22] MS: Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke

> *having an entire youth hub which you kind of tap into out there on the platforms. That is a completely different set-up than we have, and that makes a difference.* (Appendix A, ll. 1051-1062)

This explicit disassociation from the practice of receiving funding for every volunteer sent abroad is interesting for our analysis of the organisations' practice. Not only does it indicate how an anti-capitalistic ideology and 'good ethics' are determinant for the practice and self-image of the organisations, it also reveals how the organisations operate on a competitive market and as a result, the organisations tend to compare the legitimacy of their practices. Similarly, Global Contact distances their practice of working with volunteers from other organisations' practice. Through use of expert knowledge, the organisation seeks to increase their credibility and ensure responsible, ethical practices when working with volunteers, in particular through external communication:

> *Through these interviews with experts we wanted to have someone to say. I mean, we talked about our particular programme, what we do and how we are doing it. Because there are things that we do, that a lot of others do not. That has to do with the preparations, or our requirements for the length of the stay. And recently, we have developed these ethical guidelines called "Responsible volunteer work with Global Contact".* (Appendix B, ll. 85-91)

Consequences of a competitive market

Operating under the circumstances of a competitive market provides a good reason for each of the programmes to demonstrate how and why their practice is the best, most responsible, ethical, sustainable and accountable. Arguably, the organisations need the potential volunteers to trust and 'buy' their programme, regardless if they earn money from it or not, simply to ensure the programme's basis of existence. In our empirical data, this aspect of a competitive market is frequently brought up as an explanation of the structural problems embedded in international volunteering. As an association presenting a critical voice towards the market, NGO PILOT claims that the competition on the market for international volunteering makes it difficult - if not impossible - for NGOs and other suppliers of international volunteer programmes to prioritise time on validation of partner projects and evaluation of volunteers' experiences if they are to follow the economic logics that run the market (Appendix C, ll. 35-55). As such, the mechanisms of the competitive market currently prevent suppliers of volunteer programmes from implementing new ethical practices, even in cases where the

supplier has an interest in doing so. They simply have to 'keep up' with the other more profit aggressive players in the game, it is argued. However, it is also claimed that a demand for ethical and sustainable practices will eventually force some of the suppliers of volunteer programmes to reconsider and change their practice (Appendix C, ll. 21-26). This is why the association, NGO PILOT, is working towards a sustainable change in the market through awareness-raising consultancy work with agencies, organisations and volunteers. The strategy is to increase the demand for ethical and sustainable practices from below, i.e. the volunteers (Appendix C, ll. 64-71).

Preparing and producing 'the good volunteer'

In the following, we will explore how the organisations are working actively with volunteers' expectations and motivations in order to prepare the volunteer in advance, and as such ensure *good* volunteer practice. During our collection of empirical data through interviews, two things became clear: 1) The organisations are working in a competitive field in which they distance themselves and their practice from each other, and 2) The organisations are working reflectively and actively with ideas of 'the good volunteer', ethics and sustainability. Our informant representing Go Global proudly presents how their preparations of the volunteers also serve to educate 'good volunteers':

> *We definitely do that! Feel free to cite me on that, as I believe it is very important. (...) I am not sure whether it should be called 'the good volunteer'. Maybe more like the 'well-prepared volunteer', which is important, it takes time and it is a continuing learning process that I believe never really stops.* (Appendix A, ll. 808-818)

Interestingly, our informant dissociates himself and the organisational practice of volunteers' preparation from the adjective 'good' as something definitive. Rather, the organisation aims to prepare the volunteers as much as possible, because "things will not turn out exactly how they may have imagined" anyway (Appendix B, ll. 825-829). Here, the organisation is working actively with the idea of volunteers' experiences as part of a learning process. For the other programme, Global Contact, it is a requirement for the volunteers to participate in a two day introductory weekend at their Copenhagen based platform before participating in an educational programme at one of their international platforms. The intention with preparation is related to, based on Caroline's experiences, is that most of the attending young people have never travelled by themselves before, or let alone travelled long distances (Appendix B, ll. 282-

284). As presented, the organisation aims to accommodate the inexperience and equip the volunteers for their future experiences through the introductory weekends:

> *It is quite practical talks about cultural clashes, and practicalities regarding what to do and what to expect once out there. What is potentially to be experienced as distinctively different. But then also this matter of their positioning, what is their role as a guest. We do attempt to emphasise that, to properly prepare them with some degree of humbleness, actually. Because now they are about to go out there and well, actually this might speak directly into this criticism of them arriving at a workplace thinking that 'now I am going to show them exactly how the shoes fit'. Well, this is not something we experience a lot, these young people are actually quite respectful. But it is still somewhat important to define their roles, because I do think some people have a hard time grasping that.* (Appendix B, ll. 282- 294)

The preparation of volunteers entails a clarification of their role as volunteers and guests, which is referred to as equipping the volunteers with *humbleness* and *respect*. Based on the above, Global Contact recognises the importance of preparing the volunteers, both for the sake of the individual volunteer but also for the sake of the represented organisation. The preparation allows for the volunteers to meet each other and the coordinators, creating a space for the volunteers to share and align their expectations, hopes and worries about their forthcoming experiences in order for them to feel safe, qualified and prepared. In line with this, it appears that Global Contact acknowledges and appreciates the volunteers' opinions, perspectives and requests. As such, the learning potential appears reciprocal. It further allows for the organisation to set the agenda and define their perceptions of and expectations for 'the good volunteer'. By reviewing the 'how to', 'what to' and 'what not to', Global Contact allows themselves the opportunity to affect and construct volunteers according to the organisation's ideas of good practice. As unfolded by Caroline, it is important for the organisation to *define* the volunteer *role,* emphasising the importance of *respect* and *humbleness* from the volunteer. This offers the volunteers a learning opportunity, challenging a common discourse amongst volunteers that they want to help. When asked to elaborate, Caroline explains that in terms of the volunteers' hopes:

> *It is often in regards to making a difference, and to help someone. And this is a good occasion to talk about it, given that it is extremely important, to sort of have an aligned awareness of what kind of a change you can do. There was a time where we would*

> *really emphasise this whole 'Don't think you are going to save the entire world' approach, which I also believe is a quite normal expectation to hear in the volunteer sector.* (Appendix B, ll. 304-310)

As emphasised, the mind-set of wanting to *make a difference* and *help someone* is considered a common wish and motivation for volunteers, and is similarly mentioned by our representative for Go Global as something commonly articulated by their volunteers:

> *A lot of the young people have the idea that they are going out to save the world. "I'm going to Malawi to save the children" or something like that.* (Appendix A, ll. 38-39)

The organisations' accommodation of volunteers' intentions

Criticism towards international volunteering is often aimed at the altruistic motivations as reflecting what is popularly referred to as white saviorism. The notion of wishing to *save the children* is a glaring example of this. By neglecting the agency of those societies - the objects of development directly affected by the practice - and presuming once again that 'they' need 'our' help, the developers consider themselves superior and caring, and in that sense, as saviours. Or, as suggested by McGloin & Georgeou (2016), as delivering a commodity. Furthermore, the ambitions and intentions of 'doing good' along with the aspects and different nuances of 'good will' are often motivational factors for the volunteers. However, the ambivalence and the challenges potentially lie in the various aspects and manifold nuances of the conceptions of these. According to post-development theory, the controversy with a development discursive notion of good will does, amongst other things, lie in the fact that society as a category is perceived from a homogenised and Eurocentric perspective, projecting traditional development thoughts of 'the Western way' as 'the only way'. In other words, international volunteering as a humanitarian project - while simultaneously being a descendant of the traditional development structure - neglects to acknowledge and instead consequently reproduces some of the unequal power structures in play. In this sense, the communities that have become objects of development and here objects for international volunteering are potentially and consequently disempowered. It can be argued that international volunteering organised in development projects reproduces the very same practice and structure, in spite of increased awareness and knowledge of these potential negative effects:

> *I actually think that people are quite reasonable about it. It is not like you go out there to demonstrate how everything is supposed to be done and so forth, but it would just be really cool if you could go home and feel that you have somehow contributed with*

> *something. And I find that thought to be really cute, and I remember also thinking that when I volunteered, like, you really just want to do or contribute to something.* (Appendix B, ll. 332-337)

Both of the organisations are rather aware of the critical issues related to international volunteering, explaining how they attempt to incorporate an 'anti-white saviorism' practice in their preparation and education of the volunteers. However, the organisations simultaneously consider it necessary to have a balanced approach, to ensure that the volunteers are not completely derived their notions of 'good will'. This is emphasised by Caroline as a challenge in the organisation's practice. For a period, Global Contact actively integrated this post-development and anti-white saviorism line of thought, expressed in a *'do not expect to change anything approach'* to volunteers during the introductory weekends. However, instead of preventing disappointments and providing the volunteers with some realistic expectations, this particular way of communication eventually appeared to severely demotivate the volunteers:

> *It simply ended with us emphasising it too much. So in the end, we had somehow managed to completely beat these volunteers to the ground and they were just like 'I can't do anything and I don't even matter'.* (Appendix B, ll. 310-313)

This was eventually discovered by the organisation through survey evaluations conducted with former volunteers. The results of their evaluations with volunteers' experiences caused a change of practice, which will be further elaborated upon in Chapter 4 of the analysis.

Volunteers: Customers, candidates, students and participants

Given that the volunteers pay for the programme, they are in a sense to be considered customers, and as so, the organisation finds it necessary to accommodate and provide a good 'product', i.e. the volunteer programme. As Global Contact's main function is to send out volunteers, being one of the leading organisations within their field on a national level, criticism and bad experiences can hurt their reputation and affect the organisation negatively. Additionally, it can be argued that it is in the best interest of the organisation to have the volunteers 'shaped' in a certain way, representing 'the good volunteer' as the organisation anticipates them to be. In continuation of this, it is also a matter of assuring that the local partners, i.e. host-communities and workplaces, are pleased with accommodating the volunteers. Without the partners' cooperation and approval, the organisation would not be able to maintain nor justify their practice. It is therefore of importance for the organisation that their 'representatives', i.e. the volunteers, behave appropriately with humbleness, and do not perform

a white saviour complex. This balance, of creating and maintaining a practice that the organisation can fully vouch for while simultaneously accommodating expectations from all of the agents involved, appears challenging. The market for international volunteering has, as previously unfolded, received heavy criticism during the years, arguing that it is an unethical and unsustainable practice for many reasons. The critique comes from many different levels and in many different nuances, one of them being related to the aforementioned development discourse and further to white saviorism, which some would claim is also to some degree embedded in the 'good will' aspect. Other criticism also points towards the fact that the majority of these volunteers are uneducated and unqualified to work within the areas of the partner projects. This often regards work that involves vulnerable and/or orphaned children.

Whereas Global Contact hosts an introductory weekend and, in addition, a compulsory four-week educational stay at one of the international platforms, Go Global has a different structure to their educational programmes. As informed by the representative Jesper, it is usual practice to conduct an interview via phone or email with the potential volunteers, conducting a sort of *matchmaking* recruitment. The purpose of such is to learn more about the volunteer candidates, their expectations and qualifications, in order to find an adequate host and workplace, and to prepare the volunteers for the reality they will meet, live and work in:

> *Aside from me spending time preparing the participants (i.e. volunteers) properly, there is correspondence via email and phone when they have questions and such, and we also always do an interview where we interview them about their expectations for the stay and who they are, in order to make sure that there is a match, but also to make sure that we are sending some people out who are able to stay in a Malawian village for six weeks which is dead hard and something that you need to consider before.* (Appendix A, ll. 207-212)

The organisation's practice of working with volunteers is once again presented through an explicit disassociation to other approaches and methods. In this context, it is presented as a marketing challenge, as the programmes are often presented with the same linguistic tools:

> *(...) MS has an entire system structured around this, which just gives different approaches to it. And it is not to say that the one is better than the other, it is merely to say that when you read on the webpages 'travel abroad with Folkekirkens Nødhjælp' and 'travel abroad with Mellemfolkeligt Samvirke', it looks incredibly similar. But it is not. And sometimes we get inquiries that make me think, well that is not what we do (...)*

> *we are for instance sometimes approached by people who want to study medicine in the future, and therefore wish to gain experience from working at a health clinic. And you cannot do that with us. But you can with MS, because they have completely other types of cooperation agreements* (Appendix A, ll. 1056-1066)

Disassociation from other practices

It appears important for both of the organisations to stand out and ensure that their practice is the most ethical one. The organisations question the legitimacy of other practices to emphasise their own values and ideas of 'good practice'. As an analytical finding, this opens up for several interesting elements for discussion. Fundamentally, the two organisations are offering the same product: International volunteer programmes in pre-existing, development partner projects. In addition, both organisations are working actively with ideas of sustainable and ethical volunteer practice. As such, the organisations' practices of working with volunteers are fundamentally similar. Indeed, the organisations' methods and objectives appear slightly different. First and foremost, Go Global's volunteer programmes used to be six weeks, in contrast to Global Contact's minimum requirement of 12 weeks. However, the aim of Go Global's programme has been to engage the volunteers in the organisation DanChurchAid and their development work after the volunteers return after the six-week programme. When signing up to become a volunteer for Go Global, the option to 'hand-pick' what field of work to join was not available as it is for volunteers in Global Contact's programme. Thus, Go Global's volunteers needed to be more flexible and have 'an open mind' to the volunteer programme. These are some of the concrete differences between the programmes and their way of working with volunteers. What appears significant, however, is not the actual differences, but the organisations' need to differentiate and emphasise their own practice, approach and methods in the light of others. In this context, it is important to specify that what the informant from Go Global claims in regards to Global Contact providing volunteer work at health clinics, does not correlate with Global Contact's presentation of their practice. In their online presentation of their programme, Global Contact emphasises that it is only possible to volunteer at a health clinic or hospital, if the volunteer already has a medical degree, or if the volunteer is already enrolled to a medical education (i.e. an internship abroad for medicine or nurse students)[23]. Thus, Global Contact's cooperation agreements do require specific expertise within a given field, and therefore, uneducated volunteers can only choose less expertise requiring work areas. Similarly, Go

[23] https://www.globalcontact.dk/om-os/ansvarligt-frivilligt-arbejde

Global arranges similar agreements if volunteers have the relevant educational qualifications and in case a local partner has a position that needs to be filled (Appendix A, ll. 1012-1016). As such, the alleged differences between the volunteer programmes and ways of working with volunteers prove to be less significant than our informants might have learned, believe and indicate. The particular ways the organisations reflect upon their practice of preparing the volunteers to 'do good' and aim to challenge the volunteers' perceptions and motivations appear similar, however with slightly different methods, but both emphasising the practical and valuable knowledge volunteers' gain from bodily experiences of *a different reality*.

Volunteers' experiences abroad: Becoming educated and experienced

As presented by our informants, the organisations are working actively with volunteers' motivations and preconceptions prior to, during and after the actual volunteer programme. In the following, we explore how the representatives present and reflect upon the organisations' practice of working with volunteers during the actual programme, i.e. when the volunteers are abroad and engaged in the local partner projects.

> *One thing that is really important for us when we travel, is that the activities have to be participatory, preferably physically challenging, preferably forcing the young people out on unstable grounds, to where they no longer feel so cool after all. That is definitely something deeply embedded in the DNA of this project. This thing about challenging the conceptions of who the cool ones are. Like, who is it that is actually the skilled ones here, right.* (Appendix A, ll. 33-38)

As reflected by our informant, Go Global recognises the volunteer programme as an active tool to challenge volunteers' preconceptions of the respective local communities. The objective of the organisation is for the volunteers to broaden their perspective of the world and their preconceptions of those communities and its respective people. It appears that the organisation attempts to assign advocacy and empowerment to the local communities, wanting for the volunteers to recognise that these communities do have skills, qualities and knowledge beyond the 'Western' ideology that should be acknowledged. As previously argued, this challenges an otherwise dominating discursive dichotomy between superiors and inferiors in the field of development. As expressed in the statement below, Global Contact does likewise consider these active and participatory experiences a valuable educational tool:

> *The education on the platforms emphasises the value of excursions. It is important that it does not become a "back to elementary school"-experience, but that volunteers*

> *actually learn by getting out there and to meet people. I mean, one thing is to sit in a classroom and talk about different tribes or whatever it might be. Another thing is to get out and meet these people and experience how they live their lives. I mean, you do learn a lot from that. To get out and experience what it is like to go to school there, or to experience the difference between the poverty in the countryside and in the city (...) So, the educational platform is a way to give the volunteers some cultural confidence, I think. And adapt to the local environment.* (Appendix B, ll. 406-428)

As presented, the aim of giving the volunteers concrete, bodily experiences and practical knowledge is not only to challenge the volunteers' preconceptions, but also to give them *cultural confidence*. Both preparation and experience is here emphasised as important for the volunteers' learning processes. The organisation finds it valuable for the volunteers to gain insights into some of the cultural differences, which they will potentially meet while abroad, in order for the volunteers to better understand the potential complexities of the local communities.

> *There is a lot of poverty in the cities, but a different way of being poor in the countryside. How can you talk about that as being two different things? It gives a lot of learning on different levels and basically; the platform offers this soft landing* (Appendix B, ll. 413-416)

The purpose of the international platforms is explained to provide the volunteers with *a soft landing* before arriving at their local host communities. A significant part of the learning practice on these platforms takes shape through language courses, cultural and historical courses and cultural excursions around the local area, visiting different villages, schools, indigenous tribal communities and so forth. The educational stay is presented as a *safe space* for the volunteers to build up their *cultural confidence*:

> *The purpose of the educational stay is that they will soon be doing voluntary work and as such, they will actually be on their own. They might be with another volunteer, which might be someone that they do not know in advance. Then they just have to make the best of it, in a place where they do not know anyone, and where they are supposed to blend into an already established team of teachers, if it is a school for example (...) There are a lot of things that might insecure the volunteers. At the platform, they have a group and a safe space.* (Appendix B, ll. 416-429)

As part of the organisation's considerations and practice of educating volunteers, Caroline describes a workshop taking place at the introductory weekend regarding learning in the context of cultural meetings and how to process what is learned through experiences. From the organisation's experiences, the volunteers often consider the learning that is taking place abroad to be very different from their 'familiar way of learning at home'. Caroline proclaims that it simply is a different learning process and experience compared to educational practices taking place at Danish educational institutions where learning more often takes shape through teaching than through experiences.

> *They both learn something about themselves, about the world and yeah, they learn on many different levels. And so we made a workshop regarding that, about how to bring along all that learning with them, and how to think about it as learning and not as a waste of time or whatever they might think (...) A lot of them end up having experiences while abroad that they did not expect in advance. Because it is almost impossible to be sufficiently prepared for such a stay. They will be staying in something, which is just so foreign from what they have tried before. So it is about creating this open-mindedness, an openness within these young people before they leave.* (Appendix B, ll. 348-368)

An organisational challenge: Balancing between altruism and realism

It appears that the organisation's choice of practice in educating the volunteers - partly through preparatory education, partly through bodily experiences - is a reflected choice and a pragmatic solution to the challenge that the organisation can not *sufficiently prepare* the volunteers for their experiences. As such, when it comes to the learning of the volunteers, the organisation ascribe to an approach of learning as a continuous process of experiencing, reflecting, acting and reacting. The volunteer programme appears as a learning space where inexperience, misunderstandings and mistakes are tolerated and actively integrated as part of the volunteers' learning process. The organisation actively facilitates a relearning of the volunteers by including, questioning and refining the volunteers "old" ideas and beliefs of reality; both in dialogue with the volunteers before and after the programmes, and during the programme through bodily experiences that the volunteers *did not expect in advance*. This is particularly prominent as the organisation combines preparatory and experiential learning, so that the volunteers are equipped with theoretical concepts from the organisation prior to their individual, bodily and practical experiences with *different realities*. As such, the volunteers are placed in situations, where they must assimilate new, bodily experiences into the existing theoretical concepts, and vice versa, accommodate the offered concepts to the new experiences.

Thus, the volunteers' learning processes are facilitated as a continuous transaction between the individual volunteer and the environment, the volunteers are situated in. When we apply experiential learning theory to the organisations' practice it illuminates several learning subjects. Both the volunteers and the organisations are experiencing and learning - more or less consciously - and, on another level of abstraction, as researchers we are learning, when we assimilate post-development and learning theory to the empirical practice of the organisations.

A concrete organisational change, which Go Global has made, is in terms of decreasing the duration of the volunteer programme from six weeks to ten days. This is amongst other due to their change of no longer offering the programmes for individuals, and instead to focus on programmes for groups of students. However, when asked to elaborate upon the considerations regarding this change of practice, our informant explains that based on his experiences in the field, ten days are considered sufficient for the intended purpose. Jesper describes it as *more of an appetiser than a 'you go there and make a huge difference' experience* (Appendix A, ll. 244-245) to which he adds that the experience provides the young people an impression of the bigger picture of the organisation's development work. He agrees to the aspect that the participants will not necessarily gain the same knowledge and experiences compared to a six week programme, but given the volunteers' young age, he believes for the duration to be adequate considering how much they can mentally capacitate. Moreover, Jesper emphasises that when cooperation agreements are established with new partner schools, he joins the students and the teachers on their first trips, assuring that everything goes according to plan and that their expectations are concurrent and aligned with reality (Appendix A, ll. 245-256). From this it appears that the organisation has acquired an understanding of their target group of young volunteers and their motivations. Go Global attempts to accommodate this and give the volunteers the best possible learning experiences through the programme. This is unfolded in the following, where Jesper elaborates upon the complexities embedded in aligning the volunteers' "old" ideas and altruistic ambitions with what is actually possible for them to experience in practice. The political partner project in Palestine is emphasised as an example of how the challenge of accommodating volunteers' ambitions of contributing to change is resolved successfully by the organisation:

> *There is a chance that the students gain what we wish for them from these trips that generally supports our projects, which is a really important aspect of it. I mean, just these last couple of months, Israeli settlers in Palestine have removed hundreds of olive trees. So in this way the volunteers really interfere and do something extremely*

important. But there are countries where the volunteer work may be slightly less life saving. (Appendix A, ll. 1033-1038)

Contextually, this example refers to the political conflict between Israel and Palestine, and the destruction of enormous amounts of Palestinian territory by Israeli military and settlers since 2001.[24] DanChurchAid and Go Global supports a larger humanitarian and Human Rights based project, where volunteers are able to assist oppressed Palestinian communities through active and participatory experiences by planting olive trees on destroyed crops. By doing so, the volunteers support an important political cause and valuable humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people affected, it is argued. In relation to volunteers' altruistic motivations and ambitions attempting to change and affect structural problems, it is often deemed difficult to ensure that the volunteers will leave the projects with an experience and feeling of having contributed to change. From the example, it appears that the volunteers will ideally get the experience that their efforts are *life saving*. Analysed through post-development lenses, this saviour discourse appears problematic as it reproduces the white saviour complex embedded in international volunteering. Jesper does nonetheless believe that the Palestinian project presents a good example of a rather unique project; the olive trees represent an income and a value, given that "if the olive trees are not planted then the Israeli will confiscate the land*"* (Appendix A, ll. 1017-1023). It appears that the accommodation of volunteers' motivations and ambitions to 'help' and 'do good' is acknowledged as important in order to engage the volunteers in partner projects. In particular, it ensures that the volunteers are subsequently motivated to stay within the organisation after their volunteer experience and advocate for international development projects, which has previously been defined and unfolded as the main purpose of Go Global.

In this chapter of analysis, we have explored how the organisations are actively learning from and through volunteers' motivations and experiences. We found out that the organisations are working actively with the volunteers' preconceptions, partly through preparation of the volunteers for their experiences abroad, partly through bodily experiences that challenge the volunteers' expectations. As such, it appears that the organisations employ an experiential learning approach where volunteers are supposed to learn by doing; through bodily experiences of a *different reality,* the organisations challenge the volunteers and their preconceptions of

[24] https://www.danchurchaid.org/articles/palestinian-olive-trees-are-being-destroyed-danchurchaid-is-planting-new-ones

others as inferior and their self-positioning as superior. What appears significant in this context, is the organisations' attempts of balancing between an approach that accommodates volunteers' ambitions and hopes of 'making a difference' and simultaneously staying critical and aware of not reproducing a 'white saviour complex'. This proves to be a challenge for the organisations, as they are trying different strategies of preparing 'good volunteers', however still occasionally happen to reproduce the idea of volunteers as saviours. In addition, it is significant how the organisations disassociate their practice from others as a means to ensure the credibility of their own practice. As such, we suggest that the organisations are still in a learning process, where they are actively testing critical concepts to adjust and refine their practice of working with volunteers. It appears that they are using their agency as humanitarian organisations to change the field from within, however, still happens to be limited by the structures and norms embedded in the field of development.

5.4 Chapter 4: The organisation's change of practice

In this chapter of the analysis, we present the concrete changes noticed in the presentation of the organisations' practice and further discuss how and why these changes come to happen. Building on analytical findings from previous analytical chapters, we explore how the organisations have learned from their own and volunteer's experiences, from internal criticism and external demands and in addition, how the change of practice follows a broader, social change of discourse regarding ethics and sustainability. In particular, we integrate empirical data representing the critical voice towards the market of international volunteering and explore how this criticism connects to the concrete changes of organisational practice. In this chapter, we explore the empirical data presenting concrete changes of practice with a particular analytical focus on the components of change, implementation, cooperation, demands and criticism, including notions of (post)development, ethics and sustainability. As such, we aim to understand the organisations' change of practice through a combination of post-development theory and learning theory.

Time to reflect - time for change?

As presented through previous chapters of our analysis, the organisations have continually regulated their practice as they have learned from their experiences of working with volunteers what is requested, what is working well and what can not be accommodated. In the empirical data collected through interviews, it is clarified how the organisations have used the recent situation with Covid-19 and consequential restrictive possibilities of their cross-border activities to reflect upon the sustainability of their own practices and ultimately, how these reflections have led to an initiation or implementation of concrete changes in their practice. As part of a learning process, our informants do not present the changes as definitive but as attempts to comply with, follow or even push new norms for good practice in the field of international volunteering.

> *What we had earlier, which I believe many consider the core DNA of the volunteer programme was that you could enter the webpage, sign up for a trip to Malawi, six weeks, where you would stay with a local host family, in order to connect with a local partner. And we do actually still organise these trips, however now only through our official partner institutions.* (Appendix A, ll. 113-117)

As presented by our informant, Go Global no longer offers the volunteer programme to individuals, but now only to groups of students. The organisation used to offer individuals a six week stay with one of their local partners, who would organise for the individual volunteers to stay at a local host-family and do volunteer work in the given community. However, Go Global has chosen to no longer facilitate these programmes for individuals, and the programmes are now only available for students at the official partner institutions of Go Global. Differing from our initial assumption, Go Global did not per se change their practice due to the global situation brought by Covid-19. When asked if the *unusual* circumstances and consequently low level of cross-border activities gave the organisation some necessary, extra time for reflection and consequently caused the organisation to change practice, our informant refutes:

> *It would be wrong to say that we stopped due to Covid19, because that is not the case. We had our last volunteer trip in autumn 2019, and we knew already back then that it would be our last. And then Covid-19 arrived, and we have mainly used that extra time to consider how to best communicate with young people from this point forward (...) Can we do some of it digitally, how do we illustrate that by sitting here in Denmark one has a completely different reality compared to those sitting in Malawi. However, communicating it in such a way, that these young people consider it relevant and as concerning them, and consequently wants to join our work. We have spent a great deal of time considering this, given that we have had this time to kind of pause and really think it through.* (Appendix A, ll. 586-590)

From this, it is derived that the circumstances of the pandemic have not been a direct cause for Go Global's change of practice. The organisation's decision to no longer offer or organise volunteer programmes for individuals was accordingly decided prior to Covid-19. However, the pandemic offered the organisation some extra time to reflect upon some practices and organisational means, i.e. how to best use digital communication measures to reach and motivate the target group of the Danish youth. Another assumption of ours, in terms of the organisation's change of practice, was more connected to the increasing criticism towards the market for international volunteering, assuming that changes might have been decided due to ethical reasons. However, through the interview we became aware that the organisation's change and concrete decision to no longer offer individual volunteer stays, primarily have been carried out due to a matter of resources:

> *It is partly because of ethical reasons, but mostly due to resources. We could have carried on doing what we have done earlier, and just continue sending people out. But we do not want to do that. And that is related to ethical reasons. First of all I do not think it would be responsible of us if we do not sufficiently prepare people before these trips (...) I just think that in order for us to give the volunteers a proper introduction, in order for us to feel that we can vouch for these programmes, we cannot cut back a lot. And that is why we chose to stop the individual volunteer trips. The task has always been to follow these specific steps, like 'if we do this and we cannot do that, then we will have to do something else'. And of course that involves some ethical considerations, because it regards us as an organisation but also the people that we send out in the world. Meaning that one can easily end up in some unfortunate situations if one is not properly prepared.* (Appendix A, ll. 309-315)

As presented, the concrete change of practice is partly a question of ethics, partly a question of resources. Elaborated, if Go Global cannot provide proper preparatory training of the individual volunteers before sending them abroad, they can no longer *vouch for their own programmes.* The organisation recognises that the practice of organising international volunteering requires proper preparation of the volunteers. Elaborated by our informant; if sufficient resources to properly ensure qualified preparation are not available, it is unethical for the organisation to continue the practice. The organisation has learned through experience that *one can easily end up in unfortunate situations if not properly prepared*, and our informant is clearly motivated to avoid these *unfortunate situations*. Based on this, it appears that the organisation acknowledges their position as educational institution, and because of this chooses to abolish the particular practice of organising individual volunteers, instead of continuing well aware that they cannot ensure sufficient preparation of the individual volunteers.

Employees' motivations to change

The fact that the organisation has learned through their experiences that unprepared volunteers can end up in unfortunate situations, and that the employer is as a result motivated to avoid this in future practice, is significant and present a concrete criteria in theory for successful organisational change. Theory states that in order for any organisational change to be implemented successfully, the relevant employers must simply believe in and be motivated by its purpose (Coghlan & Gooch 2011). As emphasised by the critical association NGO PILOT, a central problem embedded in the market is that volunteers are often unqualified to do the work

they do, which harms the local projects and subjects as it takes up resources for training. Another critical argument is that the volunteers' impact on local communities causes a continuing need for the volunteers, even in cases where the volunteers are unqualified. As such, use of unqualified volunteers starts a vicious circle where local communities' independence is threatened. It appears that Go Global is greatly motivated to avoid these negative impacts. One could suggest that the organisation's decision to adjust their practice has roughly been a choice between quality and quantity. In order for the organisation to run a practice, which they themselves can vouch for, they have decided on a forthcoming practice with fewer, more dedicated and prepared volunteers on fewer trips, rather than frequent trips with a broad group of customers not prepared or trained to be volunteers. However, the organisation's change of practice can not be claimed to be an 'either/or' decision. The decision to withdraw their offer to individuals is based on and interconnected to both ethical considerations and available resources. The organisation attempts to comply with customers' demands (and ultimately, ensure the programmes' basis of existence) through maintenance of their activities, but by means that simultaneously ensure their ethical good will. Our informant further explains how Go Global as an organisation have in fact been quite satisfied and confident with their organisational practice, both in terms of their preparations of volunteers, the volunteers' work carried out abroad and the volunteer programme as a whole. Again, it is emphasised how the main reason for the organisational change and Go Global's decision to change their practice for the time being, lies in a matter of resources. This is further unfolded in the following:

> *It is not that we are not happy with it or think that we are not getting what we want out of it, nor that we have been told that people are dissatisfied. But it all comes down to the fact that Go Global in DanChurchAid is me, 30 hours per week, and then a student assistant, 6 hours per week. So that is kind of what we have to work with (...) What we do in DanChurchAid, and what Go Global does, is raising awareness about our work. We do that in many ways here in the house. We have a bag of money, and we can choose to use that in various ways. And so we have chosen to cut back a bit on the Go Global part in order to be able to do something else that is outside the programme. But it is not that there is in any way any dissatisfaction with Go Global nor these former volunteer trips, not at all. I think it actually represents the lifeblood of the organisation* (Appendix A, ll. 161-174)

It is emphasised that the practice of organising international volunteering for individuals is in fact a central part of the organisation's *lifeblood*. Clarified, the decision to change practice was made in order for resources to be released and allocated for other initiatives or projects that contribute to other ways of raising awareness. In the long run, the organisation rely on this to support their main aim, i.e. the advocacy work in Denmark, which the organisation must ensure in order to receive state funding, and in order to be able to continue the organisation's development work, as previously unfolded.

Integrating criticism in the organisations' practice

Representing the volunteer programme Global Contact, Caroline elaborates upon a concrete example of a current and on-going change of practice, a progress that stems from criticism towards the phenomenon of international volunteering and the proclaimed ethical issues related to this. First and foremost, is it noticeable how limitations of time and resources are presented as a barrier to the organisation. It further supports that the organisation has had some extra time on their hands to look into areas of interest, which they previously have had to postpone:

> *I have been assigned the task to look at this issue with orphanages. Which is something I have been wanting to look at for a very long time because of the big public debate, I guess you can call it, regarding this aspect of organising volunteers at orphanages. And some of the criticism regards that the volunteers are young and not educated in the field, questioning their function and purpose and so forth. So this has been something that we would like to somehow delve more into, but it has been really difficult to find the time needed, while sending so many volunteers out. So this is in fact a really good point in time, and I have been assigned this task. And someone else has already done quite a big piece of pre-work here. It is something we have been working on for quite some time. It has just been a slow process since that is just how it is*. (Appendix B, ll. 45-54)

As stated by our informant, a common criticism towards volunteer work regards proclaimed ethical issues related to volunteers' work with children, and in particular volunteers' work at orphanages. This is similarly emphasised by NGO PILOT as one the most critical aspects related to practices in international volunteering. NGO PILOT stress how unqualified volunteers engaged as caregivers for a limited period often end up harming the most vulnerable subjects in the local communities, e.g. children. However, from the abovementioned statement,

Global Contact is aware of the critical aspects of this particular practice. This is supported by the notion that they are now spending time and resources to work more focused on developing ethical guidelines on these matters. It further supports our notion that creating organisational change is a continuous learning process, and not an absolute that can be definitively acquired. Changes of such a degree require both time and resources, that are not necessarily directly accessible under *usual* organisational circumstances. This correlates with the criticism towards international volunteering emphasising that the practice is defined and limited by time and money due to the competition on the market. Indeed, the considerations to an organisational change are complex and dispersed onto many levels. The challenge here appears to be in the balance between business and ethics, practice and progress, criticism and positioning of self, as it all intervenes. Given the global situation of Covid19, the organisation has been forced to pause their usual cross-border activities for the time being, and the organisation has taken the time and opportunity to delve into areas of interest, which they have earlier not felt capable to fully carry out, referred to as *a really good point in time*.

Communicative means: Ensuring ethical practice or customers?

It is elaborated how Global Contact used to have an employee in charge of the organisations' online communication, examining and analysing how to best attract potential volunteers. One of the main 'buzzwords' in this regard is accordingly the Danish word for orphanage, which would direct potential volunteers to the webpage of Global Contact. Caroline particularly emphasises this to have caused a dilemma for the organisation, as unfolded in the following:

> *If we are to remove it (i.e. the buzzword, orphanage) what would then happen? Are the numbers then going to drop? Should we call it something different? There are a lot of things that we need to consider. On one hand we would prefer to not participate in the reproduction of a problematic discourse, but we would also still really like to recruit some volunteers that we can send abroad. Because that is the reason we are here, you know.* (Appendix B, ll. 209-213)

As unfolded, our informant recognises how the organisation potentially contributes to the reproduction of a problematic discourse through their practice of offering and organising volunteers' work at orphanages. It appears that the organisation does have an interest in changing their practice towards something more ethical and sustainable. They do however deem it necessary to maintain this particular practice of external communication for the

purpose of the sustainability of their business, as removing it could potentially cause a decrease in the amount of volunteers signing up with the organisation. This is again highlighted by the association NGO PILOT as a challenge for the organisations working within the market for international volunteering. As previously unfolded, the volunteer market is to be considered as any other market, driven by economic incentives of customers demands on a competitive market. This is further considered to cause a dilemma in regards to the word 'sustainability' and the meaning derived from such, as the balancing between business and ethics brings with it organisational complexities. If choosing to accommodate to the criticism, and to some degree customers' demands, by changing the organisational practice towards a more ethical and sustainable one, it could potentially harm the organisation's popularity and the function of Global Contact. By doing so, they would no longer meet their customers' demand, which would consequently be unsustainable for the organisation in regards to their function and business position, in particular as a de-facto travel agency offering alternative experiences.

External criticism and internal self-examination

Throughout the collected empirical data, it is recurrent that the organisations acknowledge the ethical issues and complexities related to their practice of organising international volunteering. It appears that the complexities embedded are considered rather interesting and motivational for the representatives to engage in, as it requires for both the organisation as an entity and the individual employees to self-reflect and critically question their own positioning, aim and purpose in order for the organisation to learn and evolve. Interestingly, it appears that most of the criticism occurs internally from within the organisation as a result of educated employees:

> *Maybe it should not sound like there's a lot of criticism aimed directly towards us, as there is actually not. But it is definitely out there, I mean, it is something that I have been confronted with a lot throughout my academic education. So in that sense, well you could say that you feel that everyone hates this area, right. Because there is a lot of criticism towards it. But in my daily work, it is not really something I meet.* (Appendix B, ll. 153-159)

As expressed by our informant, the criticism and *hate* towards the area is *felt* from within, from the employees' personal and academic engagement, more than it is experienced as an external criticism in the everyday work of organising international volunteering. Furthermore, within the organisation, different teams have throughout the years worked together and across projects

to develop and refine the organisation's methods and approaches. One of these is Together Against Racism, a group of internally employed consultants whose main function is to *identify and fight racism in all of its reflections and nuances* in projects, products and cultures within and outside their organisation. Racism is claimed to be present on different levels in society; embedded, interpersonal, institutional and structural. The consultancy group has evaluated and criticised MS' own volunteer programme Global Contact. As presented, apart from the volunteer practice in general, the criticism from Together Against Racism was specifically in regards to the online content of Global Contact:

> *We have had a lot of evaluation on the content of our web page. Indeed, we did have some problematic linguistic expressions there. Expressions that could be read as carrying postcolonial associations. I mean, we have had some glaring examples, like: "Karen Blixen called it her Africa - now it can be yours". Things like that were on our web page. And when you are confronted with this, it is self-evident that you revaluate it.* (Appendix B, ll. 181-189)

The quoted online presentation of Global Contact's volunteer programme was argued to be problematic as it reproduced a post-colonial and imperialist discourse. Following this critique, Global Contact soon after removed the quote from their webpage, once again emphasising that Global Contact recognises the importance of avoiding such problematic discursive reproductions. What is found particularly interesting here, is the organisational learning process which appears to follow from internal criticism and questioning towards own practices, to such an extent that it causes revaluations and, consequently, change of discourse and practice. Noticeable, the change of practice occurs as a change of product, i.e. the organisation's external communication. As stated by Caroline, the employees on the volunteer programmes are motivated by and interested in learning from criticism against their practice, however it appears that different functionalities and purposes of the programme collide in this learning process:

> *Is it okay to portray a volunteer teaching? Will we still be able to look ourselves in the eyes, having such a picture on the webpage, when there is so much criticism towards this specifically? They, I mean Together Against Racism, were quite straightforward and said 'this speaks directly into an inequality discourse' and so on. But we also have this aspect that we really want people to travel out. I mean, that is the reason we are here. And we really do believe that we are doing a good thing here. Both for the*

> *volunteers, the hosts and the greater global context. We do believe in this human encounter, and we should not be too frightened to continue traveling abroad nor to help these young people to somehow get out there in the world*. (Appendix B: 190-199).

Our informant reasons the cooperation with Together Against Racism by explaining that the team in Global Contact do wish to learn and evolve the programme, and appreciates that other agents contribute with time and resources to assess their practices. She acknowledges Together Against Racism as a competent team with great amounts of knowledge and engagement, which the team in Global Contact and their programme can benefit from. It is further acknowledged how the internal criticism forced them to look inwards, reflect and realise that some of the critique directed towards them did in fact have some truth to it. Global Contact has since the internal evaluation changed their practice, and especially their external communication of their practice accordingly (Appendix B, ll. 169-180). In this context, it is found noticeable that the employees' altruistic motivations to 'do good' have played a crucial role in regards to concrete organisational changes of practice. In 2019, Together Against Racism hosted an event in which international volunteering was questioned and discussed in a public panel debate with the aim of generating requirements to be implemented in practices across organisations. As expressed by our informant, this event was experienced as an attack specifically towards the practices of Global Contact, as they were the only volunteer-sending organisation represented at the event. However, it is also emphasised how the event initiated an interesting and constructive learning process, as the criticism was used internally and retrospectively to assess and rethink structures and practices in the volunteer programme. As such, the internal criticism contributed to ensure more ethical awareness and an continuous progress in the organisation:

> *To me it shows that this is a workplace that is willing to look inwards and point criticism towards itself (...) and I find that to be really cool, I am very proud to be a part of this, part of a workplace that does so. Because I think it will be challenging to carry out social sustainability work, if you do not dare to look at your own flaws or discards to acknowledge the many dilemmas embedded in such work.* (Appendix B, ll. 247-253)

Again, the individual employees' motivation to learn from criticism and experiences proves as a significant criteria for the organisation to implement changes of practice. Our informant confirms that Global Contact has been working on the previously mentioned matters regarding social sustainability for a while, specifically on matters regarding the volunteer work with

children at orphanages. Colleagues have been conferring with experts, amongst other children psychologists, to gain better insights into the potential negative consequences and dilemmas embedded in the organisational practice of organising and facilitating volunteer work with children. In line with this, and in order to expand their knowledge on the topic, Caroline further explains how she has been looking towards other organisations and official reports, i.e. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, WHO (World Health Organisation) and Save The Children (Appendix B, ll. 59-81). This appears as a continuous organisational learning process, where both internal and external actors have contributed with knowledge to the work regarding issues embedded in volunteer practices. It is emphasised that the external criticism towards the practice is experienced rather difficult to integrate, as no specific answers to the degree of damage that these practices potentially have on the respective children are provided. However, by means of comparing themselves to and emulating other agents in the field, which is to be considered a learning mechanism, Global Contact have carried out an evaluation of former and current practices and validated ethical guidelines for new sustainable practices. This does once again affirm that the organisation is amongst other things driven by altruistic intentions of doing good, and further has a wish to avoid the reproduction of problematic discourses. This is found to prove a willingness to continuously learn, question and reconsider own practice and structures, and eventually progress as an organisation.

What does 'a sustainable practice' entail?

When considering the term sustainability in relation to international volunteering, research does to a great extent regard the aspects of social sustainability compared to climate related sustainability. A Google Scholar search on "international volunteering social sustainability" gives 73.300 results, while "international volunteering climate sustainability" gives 58.600 results. These numbers indicate a prevalence of interest in social sustainability amongst the existing academic research on the field of international volunteering. From our empirical research, the present request for climate sustainable options in international volunteering seems to be more related to a customer demand, than as a response to theoretical criticism towards the practice. Our informant from Global Contact considers it to be an interesting and beneficial direction to move towards, as per her opinion, climate sustainability and social sustainability are interrelated. By this meaning, she finds that climate sustainable volunteer projects could also be considered more socially sustainable. Given that volunteers would not have the primary position of responsibility in a climate-related project as they for example do when working with children care, the common criticism emphasising ethical issues and social unsustainability of

volunteers' work with people, would not apply to more practical and physical work tasks, it is claimed (Appendix B, 647-658). With other words, a sustainable practice can not be defined as one thing, but as a question of ideologies and priorities. In addition to other organisational changes directed towards social sustainability, Global Contact is currently working on more climate sustainable initiatives and programmes. As unfolded by Caroline, the organisation experiences an increase in demands for more climate responsible solutions; both in terms of the CO2 emissions occurring from travelling activities, but also concrete requests for a volunteer programme directly benefiting the environment:

> *It's becoming more and more common for people wanting to avoid these massive CO2 emissions stemming from first flying all the way to Kenya and then afterwards all the way to Ghana, and then eventually flying all the way back home. There is definitely an increasing interest for this and the possibilities of doing volunteer work directly related to the climate, like climate sustainable work. So we are currently initiating and evolving on this.* (Appendix B, ll. 607-612)

An increased interest amongst volunteers for climate sustainable programmes is identified by the organisation. However, a challenge lies in the organisations' possibilities of promoting and offering such programmes, being a de-facto travel agency. The particular request is noticed by Global Contact, however they are concerned about the potential consequences that such an implementation may have on their organisational function and consequently, their business.

> *We do not know whether people are willing to pay for a trip to Germany for example, and if so, how much. Usually people travel with us because we offer them some safety. We have an emergency phone; they will have a coordinator who organises everything with the visa and so forth. If we remove that from the equation, if they do not need the visa and perhaps not an emergency phone, since they will be so close to home. There are just some other things that are challenging for the progress of this. But I do still truly believe that it could be good.* (Appendix B, ll. 631-638)

Here, the complexities between the organisation's ethics and business, ideology and pragmatism, change and practice collide again. If choosing to change their practice, there is a risk that it will cause severe consequences on their business, and if so, it will consequently affect their practice forthcoming. The customer request of a volunteer programme focused on

climate sustainability is acknowledged, and the potentiality of the demand is recognised. Yet, the demand does not appear to fit in the organisation's particular practice and characteristics.

The organisations' change agency

Global Contact experiences a discrepancy between what the volunteers request, and what they as an organisation can ethically and ideologically vouch for. As a response to this challenge, the organisation has developed a formal ethical conduct that aims to decrease possible mismatches between volunteers' expectations and the organisations' practice:

> *It would be easier for us to become more socially sustainable if the request was there. Let me put it this way. If people simply continue wishing to work at orphanages with really young children, wanting to have a really important role for these children functioning as the primary caregiver, which is something I see a lot; that these volunteers just want to be as close as possible to these children. And as we just cannot ensure this it becomes a bit difficult. Which is a shame, because there just are volunteers who really wish to go abroad to do something specific. But what they wish to do is something we cannot help them with, as it sort of collides with our ethical conduct. That is also why it is really nice to finally have it written down, as it previously was more of a stomach feeling. Stomach feeling sounds really horrible, but in some ways it was something that we really considered. Like, is this something we want to do or not? And now, the purpose is that it should be much clearer for everyone what we do, what we allow, and why.* (Appendix B: ll. 677-690)

From the statement, it appears that the organisation is challenged by requests from volunteers that they can not meet. It can be claimed that the responsibility of sustainable practices is partly put on the customers, as it *would be easier to become socially sustainable if the request was there.* This confirms that international volunteering is driven by demand on an unregulated market, as it is criticised by the association NGO PILOT. From our informants' elaborations on sustainability and ethics, it appears that the organisations' practice is partly driven by customers' demands, partly by formal ethical conduct and informal good will of the employees. It appears as a concrete challenge for the organisation to meet the demands from customers that do not correspond to the organisation's ethical conduct. From the specific statement, the employees do not know how to correspond to this challenge, however it is integrated in the learning process as a reflection and possibility for the organisations' future practice.

What and whose needs are considered in the organisations' change of practice?

The organisations are indeed adjusting their practice to the volunteers' expectations and demands. The organisations' practice is not controlled by volunteers' demands, but given that they are the customers of the programmes, the organisations do necessarily need to consider their requests in order to ensure the programmes' basis of existence. On the other side of the organisational structure are the partner projects and host communities. Their perspectives and requests appear to be less integrated in the organisation's practice up until now:

> *We have a lot of experience sending volunteers abroad, and we do know what works and what does not. But mostly, we know what works for the volunteers. Now we also want to know even more about what works for the host families and the partner projects. That is why we did the partner evaluation inquiry. But our general ethical principles are based on the experience we have and the things we already do* (Appendix B, ll. 110-116).

As presented, the organisation is interested in learning more from perspectives of the partner projects and host-communities. Global Contact has conducted an evaluation reaching the partner projects and host-families accommodating volunteers in order to gain better insight into their perspectives and experiences regarding the volunteers and their work. Post-development theory highlights a long history of neglecting the opinions and knowledge of the people and communities directly affected by development projects. It appears that Global Contact acknowledges and incorporates these critical arguments in their practice. With this it is not suggested that Global Contact's volunteer projects are development projects per se, however following the critical thought, their practice does bear traces to it. One could suggest that the requested socially sustainable practice must consider, respect and reflect the needs and interests of all parties involved. The recent and ongoing change of practice, in which the organisation now attempts to integrate perspectives and knowledge regarding the volunteer practices directly from the 'development subjects', i.e. the local communities and subjects, suggest that the organisation recognises the criticism and agrees that organisational changes need to be done.

From our analysis of the empirical data it is derived that the organisation has changed their practice of working with volunteers' expectations. The practice has traditionally been to pay attention to volunteers' hopes and expectations and support these, rather than to regulate them.

For a limited period of time, Global Contact chose to actively integrate the critical voice in their teaching practice when preparing their volunteers:

> *And we know that from a survey that we did, like a bigger inquiry that was made by an external company, regarding volunteers and their gain from their voluntary work and so forth. And I don't remember anything other than a lot of them saying that 'yeah we were definitely told that we should not expect to change anything at all* (Appendix B, ll. 313-317)

The integration of a critical voice is analysed as an organisational attempt to assure that the volunteers did not travel out with high expectations or intentions to '*save the world*' - in line with a white saviorism complex - which is continuously mentioned by both of our informants as commonly noticed in the field. However, as this particular approach merely resulted in demotivated volunteers, the organisation chose to downplay the emphasis on the volunteers not saving or changing the world (Appendix B: 305-313). The organisations' experiences of working with volunteer expectations, hopes and intentions was elaborated in Chapter 3 of the analysis, where the organisations' experiences were analysed as part of an experiential learning process.

In this chapter of analysis, we have explored the organisations' concrete change of practice as a result of their experiences of working with volunteers. Rather than a definitive choice, the organisations' changes of practice appear to be part of a learning process aiming towards sustainable and ethical practices. It appears that multiple challenges between the organisations' ideology and ambitions of an ethical practice interfere with the economic sustainability of their practice as a travel agency accommodating customers' expectations and demands. In addition, different ideas of what a sustainable practice entails and who should be taken into account in ethical considerations complicates the process of changing practice.

6.0 Conclusion

Through our analysis we have explored why agents within the Danish field of international volunteering are working towards change of organisational practice. By applying the theoretical framework of post-development we have unfolded the criticism towards international volunteering, as we have examined the structures embedded in the phenomenon and practice. By employing Kolb's experiential learning theory, we have examined how agency and learning relates to the organisations' change of practice. Results of our analysis unfolded in this conclusion should be read as a momentary reflection of the organisations' learning process, as experienced and expressed by our informants.

Agents within the field of international volunteering are working towards change of practice because of increasing criticism towards the field. We found that concrete changes in the organisations' practice are primarily a result of internal criticism towards the practice of international volunteering in general, more than it is accommodating external criticism and demands to the organisations' particular practice. Different ideas of what a sustainable practice entails and who should be taken into account in ethical considerations complicates the organisations' process of changing practice. A concrete challenge in the balance between altruism and realism is that the organisations want to prepare the volunteers as 'good volunteers' by challenging the white savvier complex, and simultaneously give their customers experiences that accommodate to their expectations of contributing to change as volunteers. Through experiences of working with volunteers, the organisations have learned to accommodate and balance between volunteers' altruistic expectations to contribute to change, ideas and ambitions of 'doing good', and pragmatic considerations of how to ensure a sustainable and realistic business. If volunteer programmes are to be considered a product sold on an unregulated market to customers with increasing awareness and demands for sustainability, the organisations that offer volunteer programmes will automatically change their practice accordingly to demands. However, we suggest that organisations do in fact have the capability and the agency to change the demands from below, i.e. customers' demands. We argue that the organisations' practice of formally and explicitly stating their ethical conduct, and using it interactively when working with volunteers' motivations and expectations, allows for the organisation to change their customers' perception of good ethics, and as such, the organisation has agency to change the market of international volunteering from below. By means of pushing the limits for ethical practice, the organisation can in the long run change the

demand. It can however also be argued that the volunteers should be credited for the initiated debate and change of practice, as they are controlling the market as customers. From this perspective, the organisations merely obey or accommodate demands, and therefore not to be considered independent and reflective agents. Nevertheless, our analysis does not suggest this to reflect the empirical field. Rather, the organisations' change of practice appears as an interaction between motivations and ideas of good and ethical practice, customers' demands and the organisations' prioritisation of economic resources. All of these appear to be affected and delimited by the structures of development policy and discourse. As such, it can be argued that multiple agents in international volunteering are contributing to the learning process and progress of the field by means of acting, reflecting, experimenting, testing and adjusting discourse and practice.

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