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Reshaping 'Maps of Compassion'
through International Volunteering.
Learning from Global South

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Student's signature

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized, cursive letters, positioned above a horizontal line.

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EXTENDED SUMMARY

In the last decade, social research scholars have examined North-South geographical imaginaries with respect of how they are enacted through international volunteers' experiences and how they are mirrored in contemporary international development debates. Mostafanezhad (2013) has coined the term 'maps of compassion' to pinpoint one of the main components of the international volunteers' geographical imaginaries. However, in such North-South spatial binary, the majority of the studies was conducted by researchers from the Global North and mainly focused on the perspective of Global North volunteers. To go beyond this limit, the general purpose of this research is to explore and understand the geographical imaginaries of international volunteers from the Global South that might contribute to the so-called 'maps of compassion'. Particularly, the study is conducted with nine international volunteers from the Global South who volunteered in Germany, using two photo elicited focus group discussions (FGDs). The geographical imaginaries of the Global South volunteers emerged in the FGDs reflect an orientalist narrative: the Global North is perceived homogeneously as modern, advanced and civilized. The volunteers perceive themselves as learners, travellers to the 'modern world' offered by the Global North, which is far from the altruistic approach – an essential constituent of 'maps of compassion'. Moreover, the study shows that the volunteers from the Global South are not estranged from the idea of traveling with productive outcomes, where they develop themselves and expand their network. Apparently, international volunteering is a practice that is naturally 'productive' and a worthy attempt to experience different cultures and other countries in a global economy. Hence, it underlines the presence of a neoliberalist ideology in international volunteering experience. Overall, from the research findings and discussion, international volunteering is a complex phenomenon that harbours various complications of different ideologies. The legacies of imperialism that centres around the Global North are evident. Therefore, it is critical to have a wider awareness of delinking from a western-centric way of thinking to move forward decolonial justice.

Keywords: *international volunteering, voluntourism, geographical imaginaries, qualitative methods, visual methods.*

EXTENDED SUMMARY IN ITALIAN

Nell'ultimo decennio, gli studiosi di ricerca sociale hanno esaminato l'immaginario geografico Nord-Sud per quanto riguarda il modo in cui esso viene attuato attraverso le esperienze dei volontari internazionali e come si riflette nei dibattiti internazionali sullo sviluppo. Mostafanezhad (2013) ha coniato il termine "mappe di compassione" per individuare una delle componenti principali dell'immaginario geografico dei volontari internazionali. Tuttavia, nel solco tracciato dalla dicotomia spaziale tra Nord e Sud, la maggior parte degli studi sono stati condotti da ricercatori del Nord Globale che si sono concentrati principalmente sulla prospettiva dei volontari provenienti da questo ambito spaziale. Per andare oltre questo limite, lo scopo di questa ricerca è di esplorare e comprendere l'immaginario geografico dei volontari internazionali provenienti dal Sud del Mondo che potrebbero contribuire alle cosiddette 'mappe della compassione'. Lo studio che qui si presenta è stato condotto con nove volontari internazionali provenienti dal Sud del mondo che hanno fatto volontariato in Germania, e che hanno partecipato a due focus group groups foto-stimolati. Gli immaginari geografici dei volontari del Sud del mondo emersi nei focus group riflettono una narrazione orientalista: il Nord del mondo è percepito in modo omogeneo come moderno, avanzato e civilizzato. I volontari si percepiscono come apprendisti, viaggiatori nel "mondo moderno" offerto dal Nord del Mondo, che è lontano dall'approccio altruistico – componente essenziale delle "mappe di compassione". Inoltre, lo studio mostra che i volontari del Sud del Mondo non sono estranei dall'idea di viaggiare per sviluppare la propria rete di contatti e trarne in futuro un vantaggio lavorativo. Apparentemente, il volontariato internazionale è una pratica 'produttiva' e un tentativo di fare esperienza di culture diverse e altri paesi in un'economia globale. Lo studio svolto sottolinea quindi la presenza di un'ideologia neoliberista nell'esperienza internazionale del volontariato. Nel complesso, si evince che, il volontariato internazionale è un fenomeno complesso reso più complicato dalla compresenza di diverse ideologie. Le eredità dell'imperialismo che si concentrano intorno al Nord globale sono evidenti. Pertanto, anche nel volontariato internazionale, sarebbe fondamentale avere una più ampia consapevolezza di distaccarsi da un modo di pensare meno rivolto verso l'occidente al fine di perseguire una auspicata giustizia decoloniale.

Keywords: *volontariato internazionale, volontariato, immaginario geografico, metodi qualitativi, metodi visuali.*

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ABBREVIATIONS

BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany
CCIVS	Co-coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service
IV	International volunteering
SCI	Service Civil International
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
USA	United States of America
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale of the study

Being widely recognized as ‘critical resource for peace and development’ (United Nations Volunteers Programme, 2021), volunteering in general terms, and international volunteering specifically, have been expanding significantly in their reach, size and variety in last decades. First appeared as ‘exporting volunteers’ or ‘overseas volunteering’, international volunteering has been taking place since the early 20th century under the umbrella of religious teachings, enlightenment education and reconstruction after wars and disasters (Lough, 2015). The movement has evolved beyond its established paradigm, which used to be a form of skills transfer to fill the gaps of development in the developing world, and now is gearing towards a culture of social justice, peace and solidarity (Rockliffe, 2005).

In academia, the development of international volunteering (IV) is definitely an interesting phenomenon that rises multiple debates around its relational impact and its ability to cultivate critical perspectives in development studies. Scholars have noticed that with their crisscross movements, international volunteers are inevitably influenced by theories of geography (Henry, 2021). Specifically, the established binary North-South geographical imaginary of international volunteering has been brought into close examination to see to which extent it is manifested in volunteers’ experience and the volunteering research in relations with contemporary international development. The global North-South spatial division refers to the way many governmental and development organizations see the world. The term Global North is used to pinpoint to Europe and its offshoots (such as Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand) or any world region that is considered ‘developed’ if development is considered as a linear economic growth process with no reference to the uneven geometries of power behind the process, such as for instance being colonizers. The term Global South is used as an opposite, to pinpoint for the rest of the world, represented by regions that are ‘developing’, often low-income, and frequently characterised by a history of being subject to colonialism (Arnold, 1993).

It has been pointed out, the mobility of international volunteers is bound in the dichotomies of ‘here’ vs. ‘there’, spaces of home vs. spaces in need of aid. Mostafanezhad (2013) has coined out the concept of ‘maps of compassion’, which she argued to be the main component of the international volunteers’ spatial imaginaries. The geographer described how

the Global North volunteers map the world into places that seek compassion, which they refer as the ‘Third World’. Such imaginative geographies are the reflection of the legacy of the imperialism that legitimizes the volunteers’ knowledge about their destination (Mostafanezhad, 2013).

However, in such North-South binary spatial dimension, the majority of the studies was conducted by the researchers from the Global North that mainly examined the North-to-South direction while international volunteering is also a growing phenomenon in the Global South both within the South-to-South and South-to-North directions. Various international volunteer exchange programs were established in the South with the aim of tackling the power imbalance in volunteer work. Notable is the establishment of the South-North component under the *weltwärts* (worldwards) program in 2013, which was founded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ, 2022). As of 2021, over 2700 volunteers from the Global South has done their volunteer service in Germany via the *weltwärts* program with about 150 sending organizations. The program has been one of the largest state-financed international youth volunteer service.

Therefore, this study is entitled “**Reshaping ‘Maps of Compassion’ through International Volunteering. Learning from Global South**” with the aim of examining the geographical imaginaries of international volunteers from the so-called Global South. The analysis of the data collected from this study will bring more awareness into new trajectories of international volunteering, as well as will enlighten a Global South’s perspective and experience that are often missed out, therefore provide knowledge advancement to research focusing on a cultural and political geographical approach to international tourism. It is considered that these results will also contribute to a better, more inclusive, and critical acceptance of ‘local development’ in line with the aims and scope of the Master’s programme the thesis is the result of.

1.2 Aim and objectives of the study

The general purpose of the research is to explore and understand the geographical imaginaries of international volunteers from the so-called Global South; these may contribute to symbolically drawing maps of compassion’ as suggested by Mostafanezhad (2013). Therefore, the objectives of the study are as follow:

- Initially, presenting the concept of geographical imaginaries and how it can be a bridging tool to understand international volunteering, as well as the ‘maps of compassion’;
- Secondly, investigating the geographical imaginaries of South-to-North international volunteers and the forces behind them;
- Thirdly, drawing out some implications for future research regarding international volunteering from Global South’s perspective.

1.3 Research questions

Based on the aim and objectives of the study, I hope to answer the questions below:

- 1. What are the dominant geographical imaginaries of international volunteers of the Global South in regards to IV within the South-North binary division?**
 - a. Are there any differences in the geographical imaginaries between Global South volunteers and the Global North volunteers? If yes, what are the differences?**
 - b. How are the geographical imaginaries of the international volunteers contributing to the ‘maps of compassion’?**
- 2. What factors are behind such geographical imaginaries?**

1.4 Scope of the study

As mentioned previously, international volunteering is a growing phenomenon among youth from the so-called Global South, including both South-to-South trajectories and South-to-North directions. Various international volunteer exchange programs were established in the South with the aim of tackling the power imbalance in volunteer work. However, in this study, the researcher will put the focus on the South-to-North IV experience, and specifically on the experience of Global South volunteers who have been involved in the voluntary service with Service Civil International in Germany under the *weltwärts* (worldwards) program’s South-North component.

1.5 Methodology and data collection

The research adopted a qualitative approach. Specifically, two focus group discussions were carried out with two distinctive groups of participants. Moreover, visual methodologies, such as photo elicitation and mental mapping, were also integrated into the process in order to bring forth underlying feelings and insights, including geographical imaginaries, which denote a more unconscious construction of the mind (Glaw, et al., 2017).

In this study, nine international volunteers aged 18 – 29 who come from the Global South participated in the Focus Group Discussions to talk about their motivations and experience volunteering in Germany under the *weltwärts* program.

Due to geographical distance, the focus groups were implemented online through Zoom Meetings – an online conferencing platform. Focus groups were facilitated and recorded by the researcher with the consent of the participants.

1.6 Structure of the study

The thesis is divided into six chapters:

Chapter I: Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the theoretical framework including following sections namely: rationale of the study; aims and objectives of the study; research questions; scope of the study; methodology and data collection; and organization of the study.

Chapter II: Literature review & theoretical frameworks

This considers the current scholarship on IV including the definitions, history of development and current debates. Besides, the concept of geographical imaginaries and its illumination on the IV experience.

Chapter III: Methodology

This chapter offers details of the qualitative method used for the study, namely Focus Group Discussion (FGD), along with the justification for the choice of this method as well as the sampling process and ethical concerns of the research.

Chapter IV: Results and findings

The chapter identifies the themes that emerged from the FGDs, and a number of excerpts from the transcripts are presented and discussed in this chapter to allow for a deep understanding of how the participants' responses have been interpreted.

Chapter V: Discussion

The findings and the themes discovered are analysed in this chapter regarding the geographical imaginaries of South-to-North international volunteers in comparison with the existing literature.

Chapter VI: Conclusions and recommendations

The final part concludes the analysis of the previous chapter to answer to the research questions. Upon the answers, some recommendations for future research will be put forward.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Contextualizing International Volunteering (IV)

2.1.1 *What is international volunteering?*

This thesis explicitly examines how volunteers create their perception of places upon their unique abroad experience. Therefore it is necessary to understand the multifaceted nature of such movement, influenced by types of organization the volunteers do their voluntary service with, their motivation, and locations. Therefore, this section explores the complexities of IV, building from the foundation concepts.

Volunteering is defined by Clary and Snyder (1999) as a complex social act that centres around a pro-social, self-driven helping behaviour, that is, not a reaction but sought out by the individual. This definition stresses on the contrast with the spontaneous pro-social behaviour such as helping your neighbour, which is not seen as an act of volunteering but a reaction to environment stimulants. Moreover, volunteering is intended by the person, and oftentimes is the result of a multiplex range of dispositional agents and motivations (Clary & Snyder, 1999)

From this definition, IV is specified further as the “global work” (Jones, 2008) of volunteering which is conceptualized as an engagement work located within a certain temporality shaped by a set of shifting and overlapping socio-political, economical relations within and among places (Smith & Laurie, 2011). Such conceptualization of IV also points out how volunteers come from different terrains and create links between places. Lough et al. (2011, p.121) offer another definition of IV with more details about the operation of the phenomenon: IV is an “organized period of engagement and contribution to society, organized by public or private organizations, by volunteers who work across an international border, and who receive little or no monetary compensation”. This definition points out, that most of international volunteer work is facilitated by volunteer organizations that receive and send volunteers to projects in foreign countries that might be accompanied by a registration fee.

Historically, IV has been positioned under the framework of international development in the latter half of the 20th century (Lough, 2015). Volunteering for development, or more particularly, IV for development, centres on the development impacts of the endeavour, in

which the main concern of the volunteer's work is to contribute in the process of social change that is perceived valuable to the local community or host organization (McGloin & Georgeou, 2015). However, Sin (2009) pointed out a shortage of academic literature that examines the complexities of IV. Regarding the service element or explicitly volunteer work, Brown (2005) pointed out, although it has been increasingly studied, the majority only discuss around the aspiration of such work and refer these experiences as a 'mission trip'.

One note-worthy complexity of IV is its combination with tourism, or the so-called 'voluntourism' – a concept that is usually put in comparison with volunteering for development. Voluntourism is an "alternative form of tourism in which tourists spend time volunteering as part of their vacation in a developing country" (Sin, 2009, p. 480). In one of the earliest studies about "voluntourists", Wearing (2001, p. 1) defined them as "those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment". McGloin and Georgeou (2016, p. 406) offered their own conceptualization of volunteer tourism, focusing on a profit-driven feature. According to these scholars, volunteer tourism is an "economic activity", where North-based tour operators receive money to send people to developing countries to obtain 'meaningful' experiences.

Volunteer tourism attracts a great amount of young people looking for a meaningful experience after school outside of their countries (Lyons, et al., 2012), or even as an activity under their academic studies (McGloin & Georgeou, 2016). Despite its for-profit nature, volunteer tourism does offer a wide range of programs in alignment with altruistic development work (Gilfillan, 2015). 'Meaning' of their experience is derived from the poor local communities they help with, as well as experiencing first-hand cultural difference (McGloin & Georgeou, 2016). Nevertheless, the volunteer placements are relatively short, stretching between one to ten weeks (Hammersley, 2014), which raises a lot of doubts and criticism around the work. Moreover, whilst a number of projects engage with high-skilled volunteers, such as engineers or doctors (McLennan, 2014), most of the volunteers are called for manual labour work, such as construction work, digging wells, or performing low-skilled social labour such as teaching conversational English (Vrasti & Montsion, 2014). As a results, some researchers have argued that volunteer tourism should focus only on promoting the intercultural learning aspect, instead of pretending to contribute to development (Palacios, 2010). Some

others even further argued that this economic activity has no redeeming feature because the volunteers pay for their experience, since intercultural learning is considered as commodity to be traded (McGloin & Georgeou, 2015, p. 406).

However, the similarities between volunteering for development and voluntourism should also be taken into account. As suggested by McGloin and Georgeou (2015, p. 406), the distinction between the two concepts might bear a “false binary”, while it is possibly more productive to see them as operating in different paradigms: volunteering for development within the realm of civil society, and voluntourism within the market. Hence, it can be said, voluntourism lies at the convergence of civil service and tourism. Moreover, the distinction of voluntourism and volunteering for development is increasingly blurred. For instance, there have been several short-term international youth exchange programs financed by governments, giving rise to shorter volunteer placements for aid programs (Smith & Laurie, 2011); or non-government organizations’ promotion of volunteer tourism to support community development (Barbieri, et al., 2012), which is explored in the neoliberal context of aid in later sections of the thesis.

The above definition of IV and its emergence in different intersections of nuances and practices, and theoretical paradigms set a foundation to move on with the thesis. Yet, as slightly mentioned previously, IV does not exist within a vacuum. In order to understand the concept more thoroughly, the next section places IV in its historical, and current contexts.

2.1.2 Historical origins

The concept of volunteering can be traced back to the post World War I period, in which people were gathered together from former war enemies to reconstruct Europe, that had been destructed by the war. International voluntary service was born as an attempt to overcome the reasons for conflict and heal the post-war effect. In 1920, a group of individuals headed by Pierre Ceresole, a Swiss engineer, travelled to the battle field of Verdun, France, next to the German border to rebuild the damaged village of Esnes-en-Argonne in the spirit of peace. This episode is recognized as the first international volunteer workcamp. It also marks the foundation of Service Civil International (SCI), the first international volunteer organization for peaceful purposes (CCIVS & SCI, 2022). Individuals crossing the borders under the purpose of voluntary work had well existed before the year 1920. But it was not until this year that an organized form of volunteerism began to function on a global scale.

After the World War II, many international volunteer organizations emerged to contribute to the post-war reconstruction, as well as to help fix the consequences of war. The projects united former enemy populations in solidarity. By the year of 1930, international volunteering became a global phenomenon, mostly concentrating on Europe and India. In the early period, international volunteer projects ranged from natural disaster relief, development aid, and humanitarian assistance for the Spanish civil war (SCI, 2022). By 1918, thanks to the endorsement of the newly established United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the year 1948 witnessed the founding of the Co-coordinating Committee for International Voluntary Service (CCIVS) to coordinate the international volunteer agents (CCIVS & SCI, 2007).

Thanks to the operation of the two organizations, SCI and CCIVIS, from 1950 to 1980, numerous workcamps were organized throughout Eastern Europe, contributing to the peaceful end of the cold war (CCIVS, 2022). As of these days, CCVIS has been leading over 100 member organizations and partnered with hundreds of organizations all over the world, expanding the youth movement in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Arab countries. Many historical records of the international peace movement have been saved since its very beginning in 1920, among which are some remarkable works, such as International Voluntary Service for Peace (Best & Pike 1948), One Million Volunteers: The Story of Volunteer Youth Service (Gillette, 1968), “Deeds not Words” (SCI, 2011) or SCI’s archives on their website.

2.1.3 Current trends of IV

As of today, the movement of IV is constantly expanding all around the globe in various forms, operating structures, and practices. For instance, with over 100 years of history, SCI has now grown into an international organization. The organization currently has the headquarter in Antwerp, Belgium and 40 branches and groups all over the world. Each year hundreds of international volunteer exchange programs are organized, engaging thousands of volunteers worldwide. The programs can be in the form of unilateral placements, some are transnational. The duration ranges from short term workcamps of approximately one to four weeks, mid-term of three to six months, and long-term programs of twelve months or more.

Nevertheless, such worldwide phenomenon has been underresearched since there has not been much empirical studies on the impacts, forms and effective practices of international voluntary service, or important statistics such as the official number of individuals who have

done IV in global scale, numbers of organizations that engage in the volunteer exchange (Swaney, 2012). Sherraden et al. illuminated on the issue:

While global economic and security tensions dominate news headlines, international voluntary service is undergoing a quiet expansion....Although precise figures are unknown, increasing numbers of people of all ages are traveling to other countries to perform voluntary service... They serve in many different capacities and for varying periods of time... Meanwhile, knowledge about international voluntary service is very limited. [2006:164]

While there have been interventions in order to place IV in the landscape of development and its relations with global justice and contemporary thinking in multiple disciplines, the scholarship is criticized to largely concentrate on the Global North (Tiessen & Heron, 2012). Few studies have been implemented to explore the impact of the movement from the perspective of the South and the host communities. This is, ironically, the locus for the ‘tourist Other’ of IV to manifest itself in most cases.

Human geography is well-positioned to examine IV. The contemporary core concern of the discipline deals with the circulation of people and ideas shaped by the structural and historical North-South inequality in the current interconnected world (Smith & Laurie, 2011). Some significant works are the study of the commercialization of the so-called ‘gap year’ by Simpson (2004), Jones’ study on ‘global work’ (2008), and Lewis’ work that explores IV’s relationship with development and social justice (2006). More details on geographical interests in IV are explored in the next chapters in order to explore the geographical perspectives of such global movement.

2.1.4 IV many paradoxes

The use of IV as a tool for personal growth in connection to global justice seems to be a paradoxical occurrence, and perhaps even an ethical dilemma, when considering concepts of accountability. The term paradox has many different connotations, but in this context, it alludes to the audacity of a notion like IV. The number of volunteers participating in IV programs, who are largely from the Global North and have the financial wherewithal to take time off from work or school, increases every year. The privilege of IV speaks to deeper structural changes that have made it easier for people with the financial resources to volunteer overseas. These changes have been made possible in part by the neoliberal ideology intrinsic to the development

of global capitalism in the last decades. It also indicates deeper societal changes, which are reflective of a mindset that assumes IV is a practice that is naturally productive and a worthy attempt to experience different cultures and other countries in a global economy.

This section addresses some particular ways the paradoxes are exposed, emphasizing the fragmented and complicated character of IV and acknowledging the role sending organizations may contribute to this paradox. Both the tourist and service industries contribute to this paradox in different ways. To start with, Bussell and Forbes (2002) recognized altruism as the main justification for volunteering, equating it with an individual's selfless intentions or a desire to take part in worldwide goodwill initiatives out of sympathy for others. According to Bussell and Forbes (2002, p. 246), in order to qualify as a volunteer, "altruism must be the central motive where the reward is intrinsic to the act of volunteering." To put it another way, altruism in IV on its own may lead one to believe that good change is inevitable, which is a concept that holds the assumption that change is inevitable: in short, the majority of volunteers believe they are of help. If they sign up for IV with the expectation that they would make a difference but later learn that they have not made a significant difference the volunteers may doubt their experience, which may be personally irreconcilable. There is a significant body of knowledge on the ethics of tourism, environmentalism, and responsible tourism in connection to lifestyles, travels, and leisure that is important in recognizing the dilemma.

Volunteer tourism is said to be distinct from mass tourism, because according to Benson and Wearing (2012, p. 245), it is evident that it has grown around a set of values that may or may not achieve a more altruistic result. Wearing and McGehee (2013) set out a knowledge foundation on what is known as international volunteer tourism as well as how it was placed within the tourist industry. It can be useful to position IV inside the tourist industry to identify any possible ways of how it might fall into the category of mass tourism or, conversely, might harm the communities that they are trying to help.

The marketing and advertising of cross-cultural experiences is one way such paradox, of whether volunteer tourism is distinct from mass tourism, manifests itself. IV organizations may unintentionally exploit poverty by commercializing exotic destinations where poor community members reside, much like tourism companies have unwittingly exploited a geographically beautiful area by promoting it as an appealing destination for tourism. This form of marketing could veer toward the negative end of her range, according to Scheyvens (2010).

In addition to the moral dilemma of promoting poverty or impoverished host communities as travel destinations, the volunteer activity itself may have detrimental effects on or disruptions to the host community's way of life (Scheyvens, 2010). Western volunteers, for instance, have a tendency to import (and sometimes enforce) their Western ideals, beliefs, and culture into the host community, which may not necessarily result in successful outcomes. This implies that, in view of the possibility for poverty to be exploited, good intentions may not necessarily lead to positive outcomes. Additionally, IV programs sometimes disregard providing long-term or sustainable 'service' to a host community. Volunteers may think they are contributing or making a difference while they do deeds of service in local community, but it may merely serve to lift the volunteers' own spirits. Volunteers could leave the host community feeling they had a good lasting influence, even if their presence was actually more detrimental than beneficial and they were unaware of it.

In his discovery of traveling as a pathway leading to transformation, Morgan (2010) gave out an explanation:

It is often considered axiomatic that travel broadens the mind and, consequently, that travel has implicit educative benefit. From the European Grand Tour, which started in the mid-17th century to the contemporary phenomenon of the Gap Year, privileged young people have been encouraged to undertake edifying journeys in the expectation that they will return wiser and better equipped to take on the responsibilities of adult life. More specifically, many contemporary educational programs now seek to integrate opportunities to study abroad or to undertake study tours, which are often billed as having personal and social as well as academic benefits. (p.247)

In 2006, the NGO Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) in Britain cautioned against the consequences of the booming gap year and short-term programs in light of such search for moral purpose. VSO opined that some programs might be neocolonial in the sense that they might further emphasize the notion that 'it's all about us' because they place more emphasis on immediate aid than on long-term development or intercultural understanding. Other programs, outside gap year programs, are also religiously focused and mission-driven, and have drawn criticism for the way that constructing IV with evangelism in sight could be antagonistic to some host communities. These types of initiatives could support the notion that IV is "dominated by the value of Westerners 'good intentions,'" in addition to perhaps being neocolonial (Simpson, 2004, p.690). Additionally, gap year programs in particular need to be

properly planned out together with a solid "social justice pedagogy" (Simpson, 2004, p. 690). The dilemma becomes how IV may be an unfair practice done on behalf of justice if gap year projects do not consider the effects on the host community.

Wearing and McGehee (2013) also offer a framework for comprehending how the situated-ness of volunteering abroad within tourism may be more clearly separated by emphasizing a desire for authenticity. While often understood to be profit-driven compared with volunteering for development, 'voluntourism' involving cooperating with a hosting local group without receiving any payment, is distinguished from tourism by its "opportunities to negotiate the fundamental conditions of existence, and therefore modes of authenticity" (Wearing and McGehee, 2013, p. 111). In contrast to mass tourism, when there is a social barrier that separates the tourist from those who are 'being toured', it is believed that acts of voluntourism allow for a more genuine relationship between volunteer and host.

While doing so, IV can refute conventional ideas of the tourist gaze from a distance by engaging in reciprocal relationships, performing acts of service, or 'leaping in' for the 'others'. Wearing and McGehee (2013) make implicit reference to Heidegger (1927–1962) in their discussion of authenticity, pointing to the possibility of IV as paradoxical since volunteers may act "for the other in a position of control" by "leaping in" for the Other (Wearing and McGehee, 2013, p.111). In this context, the situated-ness of IV in service also appears to strike a contradictory chord since entering a community might strip it of its feeling of agency. IV can be planned with the volunteer's experience in mind, much like service-learning. This implies that the volunteer is positioned as an active individual in a new culture by the act of supporting a host community through the execution of a service project, such as building a classroom, constructing a well, or teaching language skills. The volunteer earning cultural capital and experiences via their acts of service that may not be possible through commercial travel. While employing the act of service towards another (poor host community) might favourably affect how volunteers come to appreciate their own growth and development, it poses comparable problems to those concerned service-learning. Because of the attention on the self or identity of the self, IV may, for instance, prolong uneven power relations that do not promote social justice if a service turns into a patronizing act, as Pompa (2002) stated.

On the personal level, even if volunteers forget about the needs of the host community or the projects they completed years later, the meaning volunteers give to themselves as a result of their IV experience may stick with them for the rest of their lives. Some voluntary programs

take advantage of volunteers wanting to partake in self-discovery and the search for moral significance in order to profit from this emphasis on identity building. Even though it may appear admirable, the idea of helping the less fortunate in order to better oneself or undergo a personal transformation raises questions regarding the purpose and realization of such initiatives.

A number of educational institutions may indeed use international voluntary service to attract students. Such opportunities provide the student the chance to strengthen their resume and stand out as soon as they have to look for employment after their studies. However, it is not just the responsibility of institutions and volunteer organizations to create programs with self-motivation. Many times, international volunteers are also in search of their more intimate identity. Such quest of self-exploration is linked to Devereux's (2008, p. 358) statement where he said, the worst form of international volunteer work is "imperialist, paternalistic charity, or a self-serving quest for career and personal development on the part of well off Westerners". This naturally prompts questions about the way the organizations work and promote social justice. This criticism makes the paradox of IV more difficult to understand. For supporters, IV becomes about the volunteer's prospects for individual growth in that they may use their time overseas to learn about international injustice. For the critics, in general, IV can turn into a way for volunteers to reassert their status and power in the sense that they are 'developed'. In defining how the bad effects of IV indicate to the unequal social and structural concerns and the positive outcomes of IV signal to the opportunity for human progress, the conflict between transformation and justice.

Given these paradoxical viewpoints, the discussion over who precisely gains from IV raises fundamental problems about privilege, racism, power, and control. We can follow Lewis (2006) by asking: How does the host community profit if the volunteer reaps the majority of the rewards in the form of newfound skills, knowledge, and cultural capital? Greater personal prestige and authority, social mobility, and professional standing can also come with the cultural capital volunteers acquire; however, these benefits must be acknowledged and balanced against the broader effects of their work in local communities (Lewis, 2006, p.18).

2.2 Geographical imaginaries as a tool for analysing IV

2.2.1 The notions of geographical imaginations and imaginaries

The notion of “geographical imaginary” was built on the long founded interest in ‘geographical imaginations’, which is used to describe one’s understandings and perceptions of the social and physical world under geographical discipline, as well as “to convey a sense of scholarly wonder centred on geographical inquiry” (Howie & Lewis, 2014). Especially, the plural form of the term indicates its openness inviting diverse understandings and the diverse worlds that these “imagination” capture (Gregory, 1994). Similarly, the idea of ‘imaginaries’ suggests their meaning in shaping ones’ meaning-making of the world and at the same time creating different worlds (Hanson Thiem, 2009).

In many fields, including in geography, the role of imagination is framed through the effects of an assemblage of contrapuntal notions, including rationality, experience, objectivity, reality, morality and physicality; imagination lies in between the fictional and the factual, the objective and the representational and subjective. In western way of thinking, imagination holds a connotation that is fused with ideas such as exploration, creativity, invention, and at the same time with ones like illusion, ideology or fantasy, and usually it is considered attentively and critically in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge (Barrell, 2000). In geography, geographical imagination has the metaphorical ability to refigure a larger conceptual field, to bring the physical and mental worlds into closer combination, to connect the fantastical and the everyday.

Currently, human geographers, specifically in social, historical, and cultural geography, have well established the position of the imagination on the conceptual map of geography. This is comprehensible given that the very term "imagination" holds an important role in humanities and is becoming increasingly prominent in the social sciences (Gregory et al., 2009, p.282 - 285). Its use as a keyword in human geography has been developed and expanded by the use of cognates in adjacent fields of humanities, arts, and cultural study that place an emphasis on issues of space, place, and landscape, such as ‘imaginative geography’ and ‘geographical imaginaries’ (Daniels, 2011). Therefore, geographical imagination as a concept varies in scope.

2.2.2. Creating the world through geographical imaginaries

The work of Gregory and others such as Harvey (1973), Massey (1984), Cosgrove (1984), Pete and Thrift (1989), Entrichkin (1991), Barnes (2008) have paved the way to explore the world through a geographical lens in order to see it as represented and manifested in geographical terms. Geographers no longer viewed the world's structured political, popular and technical representations in a fixed and distinguished frames of relations between places and people. These frames, no matter how intuitive, discursive, textual, or institutionalized they are, they constraint the way people understand their world and also the world of others. According to Gregory et al. (2009), the geographical imaginaries play a crucial role in creating the world while also present themselves in the material and discursive construction of the world. Furthermore, those geographical imaginaries expand on and/or give meanings to who 'we' are collectively and individually, who 'others' are, and how the world works (Thiem, 2009). It can also be said that the geographical imaginaries hold a vital role in people' attitude towards others and places, which can manifest into materialistic transformation of place and people as seen in British imperialism or the colonization of the mind.

As far as the term of 'geographical perspective' or 'geographical language' has been used for building geographical literacy, it indicates that geographical imaginaries are understood to cover all the implication of geographical imagination in the construction of an individual's world, local communities, nations and regions. For instance, concepts such as Africa, European students, Italy, the lake, South East Asia, each of which are upheld with place-specific associations and meanings. There are also other geographical imaginaries that carry less territorialized meaning, namely inequality, development, social inclusion, class. Erena Le Heron (2007) introduced a brief definition of geographical imaginaries as ways of how people perceive places. Yet, such definition can reduce the concept down to a simplistic perspective. Hence, it is necessary to foremost set a good understanding of such imaginaries as social constructs that play a role in the construction of the social dimension. This means geographical imaginaries effect greatly on how each person acts upon their own place and other places, e.g. through investment, vote patterns, identity-based stories, tourist choices just to name a few examples. Working with geographical imaginaries, hence, make emphasis on socio-cultural understandings, as well as the sensibilities to make connections between people, nature and landscapes. This means that geographical imaginaries understood under the lens of

the cultural turn in geography play a significant role in the construction of place and the enaction of 'Othering' process, as it will be discussed further in the following section.

Besides, the term 'imagination' is pluralized so as to emphasize the multi-dimensional characteristic of the discipline and its operation, along with the multiple worlds where the geographers are working on (Gregory, 1994). Gregory (1994) observed the 'disciplined' practices of producing geographical data and literacy, such as journals or teaching syllabuses have relatively shaped and/or institutionalized such worlds. Specifically, there are several points emerged. Firstly, it is the role of geographers and their imaginations in shaping politics, and the process in which their work impacts the world for better or for worse. The observable production of such imaginations is a political act defining disciplinary politics that operates in the world and frames geographical contents who are also political. Second point is, while being fruitless and deceptive, any search for 'the geographical imagination' is also political, colonial, and colonizing in disciplinary sense. Gregory (2009) sees it as a reflection of geography's propensity for colonization, its relationships to power, and its manifestation through tools like maps, cadastres, and military planning. Such observation of directs at Edward Said's (1978) claim that geography is a colonial scheme, indicating geographic imaginations both within and outside the discipline must be decolonized (Gregory, 2009). In particular, in his 1978 work "Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient", Said discussed colonialism as something that was not merely about taking over the world, but also about 'overpowering' how the world had been known. For Said, the Orient, as the counter of the West, didn't exist as a fact. Instead, it was a historical and cultural product. The Orient does not only appear in imaginations, yet, it is an image that was constructed consciously by generations from the colonial world as a more or less explicit way to legitimize the power structures of the territories involved. As Simpson (2005) later pointed out, although colonialism has been heavily criticized and deconstructed, the colonial gaze still lingers on until these days, having a significant impact on how westerners view developing regions.

2.2.3. Geographical imaginaries and IV

International volunteers are tacitly under the impacts of geographical theories, as their crisscross movements are determined by the dichotomies of here and there, space of home and space in need of aid. Their movements can be said to be an immaterial product that must be imagined before and after mobility, as long as the physical space is not available (Wöhler, 2011). The adaptation of the past to inner and imagined geography conforms to the concept

of “narrative inversion” (Decher, 2010, p. 184), which captures this correspondence precisely. During the IV experience in their host country, the volunteers seek validation of their imagined geography, implying that the imagination persists and that the spatial perception tends to be moulded to the imagination rather than to reality that may contradict it (Hennig, 1999). Yet, recently, Cavallo & Di Matteo (2021, p. 15) argue otherwise that the volunteers’ spatial practices are not constrained by the preconceived imagination, but also are capable of “re-negotiating the balance between perceived, conceived and lived space” and hence contribute to the co-creation of space that surpasses the original IV goals. Overall, exploring the volunteers’ geographical imaginaries can shed more lights into how their social and spatial thoughts are formed and reinforced, which is critical to understand the IV phenomenon.

‘Maps of compassion’

Mostafanezhad (2013) has pinpointed the prominent constituent of IV’s geographical imaginaries as ‘maps of compassion’. The geographer describes how volunteers pin places on the global map based on their perceived degrees of how much a place is deprived and therefore ‘needy’ for international volunteers. There are disadvantaged places needing compassionate service, which was referred by the participants in Mostafanezhad’s research as ‘the Third World’. On the other hand, there are places that are only recommended to the more experienced and adventurous volunteers. Among them, Africa is homogenized to be the most extreme for the boldest people (Mostafanezhad, 2013).

Such geographical imaginaries are the result of a long-standing structural legacy of injustice, namely primitive accumulation, colonization, and neoliberal accumulation by dispossession, along with the creation of the ‘Third World’ that are ascended by a spatialized power segregation (Buck-Morss, 2009). In addition, the Global North is usually considered as the centre while the rest as periphery, hence, as can be seen in IV in particular and the development field in general, the dominant voice belongs to the North and is taken as the ‘truth’ (Atkinson, 2017).

The impulses to expand humanitarian acts across borders, such as teaching board, must be critically considered since they could easily be a response to, as well as reinforcing the legitimization of such spatialized divisions that give rise to a geography of injustice (Mostafanezhad, 2013). Moreover, due to the widespread use of social media, ‘digital

humanitarianism' (Shringarpure, 2020) has created a supporting environment for those impulses to develop beyond the physical limitation of space. Through viral digital campaigns, keyboard activists can easily get exposed to atrocious events in some ill-defined far-off place in the world, which majorly depict the persistent images of 'Africa' (Ferguson, 2010). Digitalization of everyday life has made possible for the 'spaces out there' to be reachable, further activate the impulse to travel and volunteer as a way to determine their global citizenship badges (Butcher, 2017).

In order to examine the geographical imaginaries at the core of IV, especially its interface with development, it is crucial to map out the geographical concerns in IV. Such geographical perspective can shed light on how the imaginaries are historically rooted and closely connected in global socio-political processes. Therefore, in the next sections, I would like to discuss about the postcolonial and neoliberal discourse that have shaped the geographical imaginaries of IV.

'Othering' processes

Postcolonial theory is a critical academic discourse about the era of postcolonialism stating that the "historically proximate experience of colonialism has significant and continuing impacts on the political, economic, and social development of both the former colonizer and colonized" (Chiriyankandath, 2008, p.35). Moreover, the main purpose of the theory is to set a foundation for resisting and making changes of the neocolonial plots and relations (Tucker & Akama, 2009). As stated by Robert Young (2003), "postcolonial theory disturbs the order of the world. It threatens privilege and power, [and it] refuses to acknowledge the superiority of the Western cultures". Overall, the aim of the postcolonial theory is not only to dissect neocolonial historical narratives, but also to replace with postcolonial narratives. According to Pastran (2014), those narratives tell the relations that are of great importance for a productive and also critical examination of the topics such as volunteer tourism. This implies that international volunteers' movement can play a role in the displays of postcolonial theory by giving the volunteers access to perspectives from the formerly colonized, while IV may also at the same time restrain postcolonial narratives. Hence, it is safe to say a neocolonial ideology upholds the imbalanced power relations between the Global North, the developed (volunteer) and the developing as well as host communities.

In this regard, as IV's current trends are understood in human geographic scholarship under the frameworks of postcolonial theory, a number of questions are brought to front. This leads us to the 'Othering' process of the development discourse as defined by Said (1978) as a geographical, historical and cultural constructed concept of depicting 'Others' as exotic. Moving after Said (1978), Wearing (2002), and Duim, Peters & Wearing (2005), argued that such 'Othering' process has been pertaining in the tourism landscape, from a western-centric point of view, where other cultures are perceived as peculiar as opposed to their own culture, which is regarded as more civilized and superior. Simpson (2005) argued that such views of the 'Others' as in contrast with the west are forged through reading and comprehending words and texts that hold some certain ideology from a certain group of people, directing at a certain audience with a certain number of purposes.

Colonization accredited remarkably to the 'Othering' process by its way of interpreting and portraying the South that is now reinforced by IV movement from the North. The 'Othering' concept can be traced back to forms of nobilities that can be considered at the origin of modern tourism, such as the Grand Tour, but also the religious missions or geographic explorations, that all included aspects of colonization. This framed the development theory of today, whose goal is to modernize the rest of the world similar to the colonizing process. Simpson (2004) pointed out that volunteer tourism, an aspect of IV, is based off the same notion and fundamentals once belong to the missionaries of targeting the South, the 'Others' in need of help, as a potential field for experimenting. Many young volunteers from the North are newly high school graduates on their gap year who do not necessarily have the needed skills to help the host community in the selected field. No training needed, they are there to work in teaching, in medical centres, childcare centres, and such. If they were in their home countries, they would not be legally allowed to perform such professional tasks. Yet, the South is the place for them to experiment the work as they perform their duties based on what they are asked to do without having undergone a proper training. In addition, the 'Others' in many situation are viewed as impoverished and they need a helping hand to get out of such impoverishment. According to David Livingstone one of the founders of the 'Othering' process: "we preach to men who do not know that they are beasts, we came among them as members of a superior race, servant of a government that desire to elevate the more depraved portions of human family" (Charles, 1927, p. 53 -59).

Moreover, such western-centric point of view can also be seen in how IV is progressively adopted as a helpful tool for development work in the South, yet its impacts at developing host countries are under researched. For instance, little research exists that focuses on the volunteers from the developing countries engaging in voluntary service in developed countries. The literatures on their role in the increasing sector worldwide is very limited. Besides, the scholars have not clearly defined the distinction between the volunteer's engagement in the work for genuine helping reasons and the ones who use voluntary service for cheap travels. According to Tubb (2006), "Some of the volunteers offers badly needed skills and forgoes the typical wages/salaries they will earn at home". It is of great importance to recognize that volunteers around the world, regardless of geographical region, play a very critical role in community development. They demand complete dedication to a different culture. However, there are some volunteers who take advantage of this resource and use it to rehabilitate the colonial posture of portraying the South as needy and poor.

Overall, the 'Othering' process can be understood within the postcolonial theory since the non-western parts of the world is viewed as the 'others'; it is where values, norms and behaviours can be flexible, and even various identities can be freely enacted regardless of whether it is acceptable at home. Simpson (2005) also illuminated on the fact that IV is promoted in developing worlds by the developed ones under a very narrow scope that is influenced by the western lenses and beliefs. Materials used to market IV in volunteer tourism are originated from the historical settings that perpetuates the notion of 'Othering', portraying the South as exotic, out worldly and enticing to the target audience.

Neoliberalism and global citizenship

Throughout the 1980s, the rise of capitalism and free markets all over the world further cemented the power imbalance between the global South and the global North. Neoliberalism is described by Bockman (2013) as both "an approach to government and a defining political movement." According to Bockman, the creation of a neoliberal ideology. A neoliberal ideology is generally associated with the politics led by US President Regan and UK prime minister Thatcher in the late 1970s, emphasizing on less involvement of governments in the market to promote business competitiveness and individualism ('there is no such thing as society' is a Margaret Thatcher notorious remark). Neoliberalism was the early capitalist response to the expansion of socialism in the 1960s but the ideology greatly extended in the

1980s. Today, neoliberal practices, are considered to be the cause of both the deterioration of the environment and the widening gap between the wealthy and the poor (Chun, 2008).

Under this discussion, the sectors such as mass tourism, which carries a detrimental influence on the environment, and consequently, “voluntourism”, need to be investigated within the context of the neoliberal ideology that is by now worldwide spread. That is to say, the part of IV that is positioned within tourism shows how IV, as a potential commodity, may possibly lead to conflict between the tourism sector and conventional notions of development, which are typically perceived as being more community-centred or people-centred than being for profit. During the advent of neoliberalism, when voluntourism was first packed and sold to young people who began to perceive it as a part of the new form of tourism distinctively from mass tourism, the tension between the ideas of tourism and service was apparent (Vrasti, 2013). Vrasti (2013) emphasizes that IV originated from "forms of education and production, such as study abroad initiatives, continuing education, mandatory service programs and internships" while voluntourism comes from a sincere desire to learn about and at the same time assist other cultures. At addition to placing IV easily within the framework of service-learning in educational institutions, Vrasti (2013) also arguably places IV within the context of tourism due to the manner that tourism is operated in a market and thus, commodified.

The rapid expansion of volunteer groups in particular, according to McGloin and Georgeou (2015), is connected to the ascent of neoliberalism as the dominant rationale behind modern development practices. Hence, it can be said, the gap year is also a component of IV, which has gained popularity in nations like the UK, Australia, and Canada, for instance, as a desired experience that may be commodified. In order to foster a feeling of global citizenship, Lyons et al. (2011) investigate the numerous ways the gap year has been commercialized. Lyons et al. (2011, p. 365) pose the question of what function neoliberalism plays in gap year programs within the framework of Australian neoliberalism, claiming that neoliberal policies have "become intertwined in the dominant discourse surrounding gap year tourism" and the way voluntourism practice either “embraces or is resistant to neoliberal ideology.”

Addressing the profoundly ingrained sense of consumerism upon the increasing number of gap year partakers, voluntourism can be accounted as a rebellion against neoliberal ideology while concurrently benefiting from this ideology in the form of gaining a sense of global citizenship, personal development, or curriculum vitae (CV) building. In this light, Wearing and McGehee (2013) emphasized the need to investigate other approaches:

Therefore, there is a need to examine alternative approaches to tourism that avoid these objectifying and commodifying processes so that the relationship between local cultures and tourists is actively repositioned. One approach to re-orientate this relationship is the concept of 'social value', which in the context of tourism seeks to endorse local people and cultures (Wearing & McGehee, 2013, p.41).

In addition, Mostafanezhad (2013) stressed that IV has mostly dodged criticism of being linked to neoliberal practices thanks to its emphasis on individual morality, besides a number of criticism in the academia. IV tends to recast the underlying subtleties of neoliberalism to the focus on the individual volunteers and the "change" they are making rather than casting a critical eye on systemic inequalities. Therefore, as Guttentag (2011) suggested, IV needs to be evaluated from a more critical viewpoint; one that does not "excuse poverty" in order to shed light on some of the unequal power dynamics between volunteers and host communities. Furthermore, Guttentag (2011, p. 71) warned that this idea of personal morality may skew some volunteer experiences by leading some volunteers to view the host community as "poor-but-happy," rather than motivating them to confront the structures that most likely caused the poverty. Studying the personal transformation of volunteers is essential because it may be able to gauge how much they are aware of structural injustice as it is seen through their unique experiences. In other words, Vrasti (2013) highlighted that in order to investigate some of these more profound issues, it is also necessary to take into account the diverse organizations running IV programs.

The Global Justice Movement which has become a network of globalized social movements that are opposing corporate globalization and is focused on equity, specifically as it pertains to the distribution of economic resources (della Porta, 2022) discloses the rise of neoliberal practices as a result of an increase in global consciousness, with advocates calling for a new approach of socially equitable and inclusive process of globalization. Diprose (2012, p. 190) asserts that this type of consciousness is designed to create awareness in how volunteers "connect their lives with wider social systems," in a pedagogical focus on critical consciousness. In light of this, the GJM and IV may highlight the drawbacks of globalization and neoliberalism if they are successful in raising awareness of the widespread unfairness that these systems produce and maintain. In this regard, the Global Justice Movement and IV may highlight the drawbacks of globalization and neoliberalism if they are successful in raising awareness of the widespread unfairness that these systems produce and pertain. While it is clear

that not all global injustices can be directly attributed to the process of globalization or the rise of neoliberal ideology, the growing understanding of these factors' role in injustice and inequality has helped IV expand in line with market demands to make a positive change.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Context of the study

The study was conducted with nine international volunteers from the Global South. They include the current and former ones that have come to Germany under the South-North component within the *weltwärts* program developed by the country's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The South-North component is to imply the direction of the program in which Germany receives volunteers from the less developed parts of the world, specifically the countries of Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania or Eastern Europe, as defined by BMZ. (BMZ, 2022)

The *weltwärts* program, whose name can be translated as “worldwards”, was initiated in 2008 to support young people to take action for the benefit of the united world. Initially, the program's development volunteer service only targeted German citizens aged between 18 and 28, who desire to volunteer from several months to a year in a placement in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania or Eastern Europe. It was not until 2013 that the South-North component was launched, in contrast with the North-South component with the goal of promoting interaction on an equal stand. Overall at the core of both components, the program promotes global learning, engagement in development topics and solidarity. Nowadays, the voluntary service under the *weltwärts* program is currently implemented by over 160 implementing organizations in Germany and approximately 2000 partners abroad. (BMZ, 2022)

SCI Germany is among *weltwärts* program's implementing organizations that are active in volunteer exchange, international voluntary workcamps and projects. SCI Germany is the German branch of SCI, an international NGO that has since 1920 promoted a culture of peace, social justice and sustainable development through various short and long term voluntary projects, seminars and trainings worldwide. The tasks of SCI Germany under the program's framework include selecting volunteers, organizing education and mentoring roles for the volunteers, ensuring the local placements comply with the quality standards set by the Program Steering Committee while BMZ is in charge of administrative and financial matters. (BMZ, 2022)

Since 2017, SCI Germany has been hosting volunteers aged 18 to 29 years old who is referred by its partner organizations in Africa, Latin America and Asia. The volunteers are

placed into different local projects in different locations throughout Germany, where they live with a host family, take German classes while fulfilling 40 hours of volunteer work every week during 13 months of voluntary service. The types of work vary, ranging from working in a permaculture farm, working with people with special needs, supporting in a kindergarten, and art and theatre projects. Moreover, the financial costs are all covered by BMZ, including visa application fees, flights, public transportation, German class and monthly pocket money (SCI Germany, 2022).

3.2 Research design

The general purpose of the research is to understand the geographical imaginaries of international volunteers from the so-called Global South that might contribute to ‘maps of compassion’, according to the definition by Mostafanezhad (2013). In order to achieve such purpose, it is necessary to collect in-depth information about the international volunteers’ individual experience, explore their perception of places and the meaning-making of their voluntary service in the Global North (i.e. Germany). Hence, qualitative methods (Winchester & Rofe, 2016) provide the best option to perform these tasks. In fact, the qualitative study approach “allows viewpoints to be heard that otherwise might be silenced or excluded” (Winchester & Rofe, 2016, p. 7). Therefore, the research mainly adopts a qualitative approach as the researcher seeks understanding and tries to give the participants their own voice.

Specifically, the researcher utilized two focus group discussions (FGDs) which were carried out with two distinctive groups of participants and the researcher as the moderator. FGDs is an effective explorative tool to gather participants who share similar backgrounds and experiences to discuss as the researcher tries to “collect a group language or narratives” (Mishra, 2016, pp. 1-5). Focus groups discussions can be supported by the researcher’s guidance of participants on specific topics, but these can also be stimulated by the use of images as in the case of photo elicitation or mental mapping, which were both integrated into the FGDs as a prompt and visual supplement for the verbal discussions. Visual methodologies, such as photo elicitation and mental mapping, albeit deemed relatively new for the majority of disciplines, have been proven to be effective to bring forth underlying feelings and insights, including geographical imaginaries - which denote a more unconscious construction of the mind (Glaw et al., 2017).

Photo elicitation is the method that optimize photographs or other visual mediums to stimulate verbal discussion in order to explore different layers of meaning (Glaw et al, 2017). To use this technique in data collection, the participants were asked to share with the researcher three to four photos from their personal archives representing their volunteer experience in Germany. Then upon their consent, the photos were shown to all of the participants to stimulate the discussion about the images that they associated with volunteering in Germany or Europe. Such visual technique can evoke feelings, memories, and deeper insights, and overall create “deep and interesting talk” that words alone might not (Harper, 2002, p. 23). Moreover, the fact that the participants select their own photos empowers them to open up freely since they know how the discussion will be, and they feel to be a part of the collaborative effort to co-produce knowledge and understanding (Harper, 2002).

As for the mental mapping technique, the researcher showed a map of the world and asked the participants to point out the areas that they would like to volunteer in the future, ranging from their most interested places to their least interested ones. Such technique was an effort to re-create Mostafanezhad’s (2013) mental mapping exercises when she asked the participants to colour a map of the world with three colours corresponding to where they were most, least interested and neutral about volunteering. Mental mapping is another visual tool to retrieve respondents’ perceptions of certain places, or in other words, geographical imaginaries that deems more effective than verbal techniques alone (Jung, 2012). In this research, the technique was used to aid the volunteers’ visualization of their ‘maps of compassion’.

The FGDs had a framework of themes to be explored, hence, a discussion guide was adopted by the moderator as can be found in Annex 1, Focus Group Discussion Guide. Both discussions started with a set of opening questions about the volunteers’ projects and roles, and then moved further into their motivations for international volunteering, their expectations, what volunteering and volunteering in Germany meant for them, what mental images came to their mind when thinking about volunteering in Germany.

In this study, nine international volunteers aged 18 – 29 who come from the Global South participated in the FGDs to talk about their motivations and experience volunteering in Germany under the *weltwärts* program. Due to the geographical distance, the interviews were implemented online through Zoom Meetings – an online conferencing platform, facilitated and recorded by the researcher with the consent of the participants. The researcher decided to utilize Zoom Meetings as a tool for data collection because of its founded user friendly interface and

cost-effectiveness, along with its data management features, and security options (Archibald, et al., 2019).

3.3 Sampling

For the research, non-probability convenience sampling was adopted due to its practicalities. The nine participants were recruited solely based on their availability and interest in participating in the focus group discussions. They all are Global South volunteers who have involved in the voluntary service with SCI in Germany under the *weltwärts* program’s South-North component. Hence, they fit the profile of a Global South international volunteer as defined by BMZ: young people aged 18 to 29 from partner countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Oceania and some parts of Eastern Europe (BMZ, 2022).

Nationality	Number of participants	
	Female	Male
Nigeria	1	0
Tanzania	0	1
Uganda	1	2
Thailand	1	0
Vietnam	3	0
Total	9	

Table 1. Profile summary of the nine participants

The nine volunteers were then divided into two groups based on their levels of engagement in IV: Group 1 consisted of four volunteers who have just started their 13-month voluntary service since the beginning of September 2022, while Group 2 consisted of five who already finished theirs and returned to their home countries for an amount of time ranging from one to three years. The two different sample groups were chosen because they allow the perspectives of international volunteers from different experiential points of view.

3.4 Data analysis

The researcher followed constructivist-interpretive paradigm, in which reality or knowledge is constructed through interactions between a researcher and the research subject (Walt, 2020). The researcher did not adhere to an ontological view that there is only one true reality, or a 'correct' meaning outside of ones' own interpretation. Meaning and value of the empirical data are to be discovered through interpretation. Therefore, the researcher decided against using an automated content analysis software to organize and analyse the data in order to utilize the capacity to provide nuanced interpretations and contextual understandings of what was said.

Moreover, the researcher is aware of the fact that the coding process is influenced greatly by her individual experience, motivations and reading of literature, especially due to the fact that she was once being involved in the South-North volunteering program. On the other hand, the researcher also considered her positioning in the study as one of the advantages to allow empathy with the participants, while trying to remain a certain level of objectivity.

3.5 Limitations of the study

The present investigation has been valid and valuable in dealing with the primary research questions, which are to explore and understand the geographical imaginaries of international volunteers from the Global South that might open more insights to the geography of IV. However, in conducting this research work, certain limitations appeared.

To begin with, there are obvious limitations in implementing a qualitative study in a specific geographic location that uses a small, non-random sampling. Specifically, the volunteers recruited for the research were all from the same program that places them in the same country for their voluntary service. Moreover, they belong to the age group of 18 to 29 years old as a requirement to join the volunteer program, while generally volunteers are not limited to any particular demographics. Hence, the research's findings will not be necessarily generalized to all the Global South volunteers.

Moreover, the focus group discussion design holds a certain number of setbacks since it is not a natural atmosphere but a social atmosphere (Mishra, 2016). The respondents' answers

and comments could have been filtered to fit in the group context and should be strictly interpreted in such context. Besides, the moderator was not very experienced in facilitating FGDs and visual techniques, namely photo elicitation and mental mapping – which can also be a limiting factor to producing the optimal outcome of the FGDs.

Furthermore, the FGDs were conducted in English while neither of the participants nor the researcher are English native speakers. Therefore, the participants had a certain level of difficulty in expressing their ideas with their limited range of English vocabulary. Besides, the FGDs were done online via Zoom. Not all participants were comfortable having their cameras on. Thus, the facial expressions and body language, which could be informative, were missing.

Last but not least, the researcher acknowledges her previous role as an international volunteer from the Global South, which might have impacted the coding process. However, as previously stated, it could be considered as an advantage in allowing a certain level of closeness and understanding with the participants. Moreover, this also helped the researcher to gain access to the volunteers that could have been difficult to reach.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Throughout the research, confidentiality issues were well taken into consideration. In advance to the FGDs, the participants were well informed about the research purpose and procedure before being asked for consent (see Annex 2 Consent form). During the FGDs, the moderator made sure to remind the respondents that participation was voluntary at all times with the possibility of discontinuing at any time. Respondents must agree to the recording process and always have to be advised of the confidentiality of all information given, and anonymity of all taped and transcribed discussion material. Besides, in the study, pseudonyms were assigned for each respondents in order to maintain their anonymity.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The chapter will identify the themes that emerged from the FGDs carried out online with nine international volunteers from the Global South. Although nearly all identical themes are shared between two sample groups, the chapter is divided into sections based on each group in order to examine how each theme emerged within the group. They are the themes of give-and-take mechanism of international volunteering, geographical imaginaries of the Global North, and geography of compassion, specifically learning motivations as a theme emerged only in Group 1, while explorative motivations emerged only in Group 2. A number of excerpts from the transcripts are presented and discussed in this chapter to allow for a deep understanding of how the participants' responses have been interpreted.

4.1 Group 1: Ongoing International Volunteers

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the four participants of this group were the volunteers who had started their 13-month civil service in Germany for about a month at the time of the FGD. Among the four, two of them are from Uganda, one from Nigeria and one from Tanzania.

4.1.1 *Learning motivations*

The FGD started with warm-up questions on motivations and what influenced participants' decision to engage with IV. Looking into the volunteers' motives to volunteer in Germany, one of the Global North's destination, can shed some lights into their underlying geographical perceptions in order to move forward into deeper analysis.

As the volunteers exchanged their motivations to come to volunteer in Germany, nearly all responses could be categorized into major categories: to learn practical skills and new knowledge, to explore new places and new cultures, and a few personal interests related to the projects' types of work. Among these motivations, the motivation to learn was the most dominant one. All four participants stressed that they expected to learn how certain things are done in Germany and would like to bring their acquired skills and knowledge back to their home country. They acknowledged the fact that Germany is a so-called developed country and

indicated that they could only learn greatly from the “modern world” as Reggi, one participants from Uganda, said:

...I want to add on my experience in the modern world so that's why I got interested in this project. And I want to get more skills and knowledge about the modern agriculture. When I return, I also dream of setting up a demonstration of farm by my own.

Later on in the discussion, the term “modern world” referring to Germany was used again by the volunteers, which is worth noting. Yemisi from Nigeria also added that volunteering in a developed country is a “big bonus” because of the many opportunities to learn and experience:

So I'm here volunteering, I'm taking back what I learn back home. So coming from a developing country to a developed country is a big bonus for me.

Regarding the personal interests related to their choice of the type of work in their project, the volunteers also spoke directly about how their line of work or interests in their home country influenced their decision:

...from childhood, I have done a lot agriculture, my parents are agro-business people. And 70 percent of my country's economy relies on agriculture. Once I studied a course on modern agriculture for one year. I've been motivated a lot by my parents and myself. [Reggi, Uganda, Group 1]

I picked the project for one first reason me being a sociologist. I am very keen on knowing the social life of whether you being disabled or abled person. And I care for someone with special needs. And I also wanted to go more into that line (of working with people with special needs). I would like to study in such line of social care for disabled persons so I first wanted to have the work experience, the practical before going to the theoretical. That's one of the reasons why I am here in Germany. [Yemisi, Nigeria, Group 1]

Concerning their desire to explore new places and cultures, the volunteers slightly touched upon the fact that they wanted to make use of the Schengen visa to travel around Europe. All of them shared the love for travelling and making new friends from different backgrounds. However, while such desire was mentioned more frequently later on in the

discussion, it was only slightly spoken about by the volunteers when explicitly asked about the motivations.

My main motivation is to learn how people here in Germany take care of people with special needs, also exploring and learning some new cultures, which sometimes may favour some special groups in some ways. So my main motivation to come here is to see how people with special needs are being handled. Some others are learning new cultures, meeting people, making new friends. [Eron, Tanzania, Group 1]

Overall, the prominent motivation for the volunteers to embark on their voluntary service in Germany is to learn. From their exchanges, it seems that there is a certain level of assumption towards the legitimization of whatever knowledge and reality presented to them in Germany that will be transferred back to their hometown. Moreover, it is worth mentioning that no aspect of altruism was talked about by the volunteers as a motivation. This raises the question to the researcher of whether the volunteers see Germany as a place in need of help. Nevertheless, the following sections will explore more of the volunteers' perceptions and geographical imaginaries as the FGD continued with more thought-provoking questions.

4.1.2 Give-and-take mechanism of international volunteering

While discussing about the topic of volunteering in Germany and their personal experience with volunteering in general, all four volunteers shared the idea that volunteering is similar to a “trade”.

The term volunteering, for me, is like giving back, or a trade. I give my service and I learn. Because no matter how you're saying: 'Oh I'm just volunteering'. But one way or another, I'm learning something, I'm acquiring knowledge, gaining friends, connections and what would be helpful for me. And whoever I'm bringing my service to, is also gaining something from me. So that's volunteering for me. [Yemisi, Nigeria, Group 1]

It was emphasized that volunteering does not stop at giving or “extending help”, as Reggi said. IVs also gain something back from the learning and sharing aspects of volunteering. For instance, Reggi was exposed to “different technologies and modern use of machines” that may be beneficial for his own agricultural project, while working with other people from different backgrounds.

On the other hand, when dwelling into the specific gains they had from their projects versus the impact of their work on the host community, all four volunteers seemed to be more eager to talk about the benefits of their experience, while having a difficult time articulating the benefit linked to their specific participation gained by the projects they were volunteering on. Particularly, the volunteers all expressed their appreciation towards their time in Germany as they had experienced in an immersive manner German culture, friendships, kindness, along with the practical skills they had acquired in working with children, working with people with special needs, farming practices, etc.

...there is what we call cultural immersion experience as a benefit, whereby living in Germany will make me notice the cultural differences compared to your home and your country. So you will discover a lot of new things about culture-wise; and (it is) also a lot of friendships I'm making, and I'm going to make so many of them; then also (it is) gaining more experience here abroad. It's also an adventure no one can forget, so many memories that you can take as part of the benefits. [Gonza, Uganda, Group 1]

Yemisi called her experience as a “total eye opener” to describe her positive appreciation with German system for people with special needs:

My work has been a total eye opener because it's so different from what it is in my country in Nigeria, how care in general is being perceived here in Germany and how it's been perceived in Nigeria, care for disabled persons is way different.

However, when talking about the receiving end of their social service, the volunteers all agreed that only their projects and community could answer that question. At the beginning, most of them could merely list out their responsibilities and general contributions such as their time, their availability, and humbly said how their presence had been noticed.

To me, that question is a bit tricky. For me, (the project I am working on) benefits from my time. When they need me, I'm always there. This kind of question is more appropriate to them (the people involved in the project) because they are the one who see from me. So far, I think what they expect from me is assistance. [Eron, Tanzania, Group 1]

Nevertheless, once having been encouraged by the moderator to think about what made them different from a German volunteer, the volunteers started to open up more about the

cultural sharing aspect. They were able to present their cultures to their host community, which they called “cultural integration”. Yemisi noticed that their colleagues had the perception that Africa was homogeneous, hence, she tried to instill that there are different countries with various cultures there. She would like to show them once the traditional costumes of Nigeria and traditional dishes from her hometown.

It can be said, that IV’s perception of the difference their contribution provided was mainly cultural, meaning that they turned into cultural ambassadors of their countries of origins, extending to mediators between the cultures of Germany and where they came from. Yet, there appeared to have an unbalance in the give-and-take mechanism perceived by the volunteers. From the way they articulated their motivations and the perceived benefits by both sides, the volunteers painted themselves more as a learner in their experience.

4.1.3 Geographical imaginaries

As stated in the previous chapter, FGDs were supported by photo elicitation, meaning that discussion was boosted through images produced by the participants in the focus group. This technique was adopted to evoke IVs deep feelings and insights into their spatial imaginaries, which are manifested in both the conscious and unconscious construction of the mind (Glaw et al., 2017). Among the photos shared by the volunteers, as well as their discussion about the associated ideas and images, a number of themes emerged, namely the ‘modern world’, land of opportunities, the architecture, and the people.



Figure 1. Four photos shared by Group 1 in the FGD

Firstly, the “modern world” is a term that was repeatedly used by one of the volunteers, Reggi, as already mentioned. He shared that volunteering in Germany was a chance for him to experience living in a “modern world”, where he could learn about modern farming techniques and modern machines. The rest of the volunteers also shared the same approach to their experience in Germany, while pointing out different things associated with this “modern world”. For example, Yemisi was impressed by the well-organized healthcare system and the overall behaviour towards people with special needs in Germany. She also commented on Gonza’s photo with a vintage car (as seen in Figure 1), that she had seen a lot of famous car brands on the street in Germany, which was not something that Nigeria would have. Agreeing with Yemisi, Gonza said that the reason he took a photo of the vintage car was because it was something people should expect to see in Germany.

Secondly, the volunteers also mentioned Germany as a land of opportunities, yet life in Germany makes one to be strong, for example, Eron said:

In Germany, the life tricks you to be strong. Germany is full of opportunities but also you need to be strong because not all opportunities will come to you, so you need to look for them.

Connecting with what the volunteers had shared about the benefits of doing voluntary service in Europe, they saw their time in Germany as an open door to various learning opportunities, self-improvement, new experience and friendships.

Thirdly, specific urban landscape denoted by some architectural features emerged as common representations of Germany. Yemisi shared a photo of herself standing in front of skyscrapers:

Some of these pictures, they are different from the ones I would take in Nigeria. The background is obviously different. Even if I don't take it with people, the landscape and all, this is not Nigeria, like the buildings, we don't have landscape like this, we don't build in this manner. So it's obvious that I'm not in Nigeria with this picture.

Eron also explained why he decided to share a photo of himself standing in front of a row of residential buildings:

...the types of buildings and the colours say that this is not in Tanzania but in somewhere outside of Tanzania. But when I first heard about volunteering in Europe, I always expected that there would be many opportunities. So the photos show that I have passed this place and this place, like a restaurant in a boat, which was a really good moment. When someone sees it, they can see that it is very different (from Tanzania).

While the discussion was around what represents Germany and their experience in the country, instead of pointing out the characteristics of typical Germany's architecture – such as Bauhaus style, half-timber houses, the volunteers focused elements that to them marked a difference from the urban features or urban lifestyles of their home countries. Seemingly, their geographical imaginary of Germany as part of the “modern world”, translated in the production of images that stressed the difference with the geographical imaginary of participants' own countries.

Moreover, engaging with the conversation around why the photos were chosen, Reggi suggested that:

I think when someone takes a picture in front of anything, like a structure or a building, or a car, it's because it feels so unique and so new to him. Or it's something you've always seen on the internet, on TV, and now you reach the place and you think: Wow,

I take the picture of the place to keep the memory and for the future, you can say 'I was in this place' and show proof. So it's like to bring a picture into reality. So we had images before coming to Germany and we reach and we see the images. It's like you're watching a movie and now you're in the movie.

Reggi claimed that many of his experience in Germany had been as if he was in a movie, because many things he saw could only be found in television or on the internet when he was back home. Reggi's claim opened up for other volunteers about the influence of media on their mental images about Germany or the Global North. Yemisi, hence, further shared that:

For my pictures, the pictures I would have really loved are the ones of myself standing in front of famous car brands, because I really love cars. These cars I have only seen them in car vlogs on YouTube, Facebook or Instagram. Now I see them live! The engines they give me goose bumps. Before I only saw them on music videos and now they're in my neighbourhood as much as motorbikes are common in Nigeria.

Lastly, the people or the concept of friendship also came up many times throughout the discussion. The volunteers appreciated how coming to Germany had given them the chance to meet new people from different parts of the world. They not only were able to build relationships with other international volunteers but also their German colleagues, which Yemisi did not expect. Yemisi frankly spoke:

Before I was thinking that when I get to this country I will be by myself, no one will help me. But they are very accommodating. They want to help. You just need to ask them and they will provide the help you need.

It can be said that the volunteers had some generalized ideas about Germans. Apart from Yemisi, the other volunteers also expressed their surprise of how friendly and accommodating their German colleagues were, which they said to have surpassed their expectation.

4.1.4 Geography of compassion

The volunteers were asked to partake in the mental mapping exercise where they were shown a map of the world and tried to visually place themselves in their future volunteer placements. Whilst the volunteers pinned out different areas where they were most interested

in volunteering, they gave almost identical reasons for choosing the countries, which were categorized as developed countries. The volunteers expressed their desire to learn and experience life there. For instance, Yemisi shared that:

I'd love to volunteer in another African country, like Rwanda. Rwanda is doing so well, it's one of the most organized African countries. Maybe I would like to go there (to observe) what they are doing differently that my country is not doing. And Sweden because Sweden is a socialist country. Sweden is super organized.

Yemisi had the desire to learn and bring back the acquired knowledge to her home country, Nigeria.

For Reggi, his next desired destination are the United States of America (USA) and Canada. He again mentioned the fact that he had usually watched a great amount of contents about the USA and Canada on television which made him have a certain image about the two countries:

It's Canada, USA... Why? I feel like once I should visit them, because the same story that we keep on watching things happening in the USA, Canada. And I feel maybe they are very beautiful countries, there are many beautiful people. Being one of the most powerful countries around the world makes them a very interesting country to be at, to see how people live, how people behave, how the places develop, and also to keep memories.

On the other hand, Gonza would like to volunteer in other countries in Europe because, according to him, there are many volunteering opportunities. Gonza had been familiarized with different channels where he can easily find new volunteer projects in Europe. Nevertheless, for him, volunteering in Europe was also centred on learning and gaining practical experiences.

Moreover, other factors were also taken into account such as language and relations with sending partners. Gonza would like to volunteer in Europe because he can speak the most common languages in Europe; or Nigeria was also one of the choices for him because his sending organization in Uganda had a good partnership with many organizations in Nigeria.

When talking about the least interested areas to volunteer, all of them pointed out the areas that were politically unstable and could threaten their safety. The volunteers mentioned

Ukraine, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Throughout the exercise, the volunteers did not consider how level of help needed in each country or how impactful of their presence would be. Instead, they concentrated on the learning aspect of their volunteer experience and the benefits upon their return in their home country.

4.2 Group 2: Previous International Volunteers

Group 2 consisted of five volunteers who finished their 13-month voluntary service and returned to their home country. Among the five, one is from Nigeria, one is from Thailand and the other three are from Vietnam.

4.2.1 Explorative motivations

For group 2, the responses on the volunteers' motivations to volunteer in Germany can be classified into four main categories: to explore one's own self, to explore new places and cultures, to gain skills and knowledge, and personal interests. Unlike group 1, the most prominent motivations for group 2 was self-exploration. Four among five volunteers explained how they wanted a break from their usual school and work routine, hence, their volunteer trip in Germany was an opportunity for that, as well as to figure out "what to do next". For instance, Hung, from Vietnam, told her story from how she used to work with international volunteers in Vietnam and then decided to take a gap year:

Before volunteering in Germany, I actually was working with the partner of SCI in Vietnam. I was in charge of incoming volunteers, which means I work a lot with volunteers coming from all over the world come to Vietnam. So I finished university, it was quite of a time when I wasn't sure what I want to do next. I think it's also a good time that I am not studying and not working at the same time so I should take a gap year. And I always have a viewpoint of someone receiving people from all over the world and then have experience in my own country. So I think it would be a good idea to take another viewpoint to see from a stranger or an outsider to look in another country. I think volunteering is a good opportunity to travel as well, especially in Europe where you can go to several countries. For me, it's more like a personal experience, a gap year to understand more myself, and what to do next.

Moreover, according to Hung, her volunteer project, which was in the countryside, gave her a change of air since she had been a city girl for her whole life.

On the other hand, Jummy, a volunteer from Thailand, compared her volunteer experience with her solo backpacking experience in Thailand which had given her a taste of how it was to travel alone, how much she had learned about herself from that trip, especially her desire to explore the world. This desire of Jummy was shared with the rest of the volunteers. For example, to Tu, another volunteer from Vietnam, exploring the world means being in an international environment, meeting new people and learning about their cultures.

Gaining new skills and knowledge was also one of the motivations mentioned by the volunteers. Angella from Uganda, who had experience working with disadvantaged groups with her sending organization, said that she wanted to see how a developed country takes care of people with special needs. Later on during the discussion, Angella mentioned her diary where she wrote about what she learned from Germany and would like to pass onto other volunteers in Uganda. Or in the case of Jummy, she also wanted to learn about sustainability in Germany, which was also the reason for her to choose a project on education and agriculture for children.

Besides, personal interests could also motivate the volunteers to do a certain type of work in their project. Hien from Vietnam worked with a project called the People's Theatre where she could live with her acting passion:

I volunteered for a project called The People's Theatre and the project is what it sounds like. It's a theatrical project that uses theoretical methods as an aiding mechanism to education. So I got introduced to this project by Hung, who was already in Germany doing volunteering by the time I applied. And I think this project suited me well, because I have a passion for acting.

Similarly, Angella was also interested in working with people with special needs, who she used to work with in Uganda. Her experience drove her to choose the project at a care centre for people with special needs in Germany.

4.2.2 Give-and-take mechanism of international volunteering

While discussing about the topic of volunteering in Germany and their personal experience with volunteering in general, the five volunteers had the same idea of what defined volunteering. It was the give-and-take mechanism, which was also pointed out during the FGD of group 1. Thu explained that volunteering was the way for them to contribute to the society and also gain something from this ‘societal engagement’ itself:

For me, when I do volunteering and anything related, I would enhance my networking skills. You use that network to help with your future career, your study, you can never know.

To add on that, Hien shared that her definition of volunteering had expanded since her social service Germany, which was no longer only helping people in need, but also an experience for an individual to take part in:

Before volunteering in Germany, the concept of volunteering was to spend your time to help people in need, to help people that do not have as developed backgrounds as you have. But after the volunteering experience in Germany, I think that concept has broadened a little bit for me. It's more like an experience: you do spend time without actually wanting to gain any financial benefit but spend time to gain experience for yourself. That experience might be helping someone in need, or just doing a project that is somehow beneficial for the society.

Moreover, Hung added that: “From my personal experience, it's also about personal growth and development, and expanding my skills, network as Thu mentioned.” However, Angella had a separate definition of volunteering in Germany apart from volunteering as a concept. Specifically, she saw going to Germany to be an opportunity to learn from, again, a developed country:

I think for me it is an opportunity for people from less developed countries to come here and learn how things are done, for example, how German people take care of people with disabilities. So we get this chance to see what techniques they have, what they do for these people. For me I see it as an opportunity to learn, to get more skills, because we have to take these skills back to our countries. So it's an opportunity to come, learn and go take back to our country and develop.

Therefore, it can be understood that the volunteers mostly perceive their experience in Germany as a time for personal development and learning, which is similar to what emerged in Group 1.

While being asked about their contributions to their projects and host communities, the five volunteers of group 2 were able to list out more specific details than group 1. For example, Hien said to have contributed her many ideas to her theatrical and educational project, or Hung had suggestions to make work arrangements more effective in the farm where she volunteered. In the meanwhile, Yummy recalled the little incident where she reminded her chief of an important item for work.

On the other hand, besides their willingness to help and their availability, Angella and Thu did not see themselves contribute much or more than the official staff of the projects because of their lack of experience in the field. Angella said:

I think I didn't bring much because I didn't have much of experience with these people (with special needs), but just the willingness to learn and to associate with these people and take them as my friends, my family, it benefited my project.

However, when being asked about what made them difference from a German volunteer, similar to Group 1, the five volunteers of Group 2 started to talk about the cultural sharing aspect. They opened up about how they shared their cultures with the host community by dressing in their traditional clothes during big celebrations, cooking their traditional dishes. Hung added that she broke the stereotypes about Vietnamese girls for their host project through daily conversations.

Overall, it was seemingly easier for the volunteers to talk about what they gained from their 13 months in Germany, especially for Tu, who witnessed the biggest change in herself:

I would say I have gained lots of thing in my project. For example my German level has gone from good to excellent, according to my colleague and other people. My mindset has gone more open than before, more confident in myself now and more straight forward with my opinions and feelings, which is kind of the opposite to how I was before. You know, Asians tend to be shy and not dare saying what they think, always beat around the bush. But now I have been more direct. I also travelled to other

countries since I came. I visited old friends, met new friends and I have countless precious experience that I will never be able to forget.

Thanks to Tu, the others were also made aware of their changes after their trip in Germany. Angella said she had grown independent, while Yummy said she was able to spend more time with herself to “explore back inside”. Hung and Hien shared about their increased level of consciousness with their surroundings and the environment, as well as about sustainable life style. Besides, there were the friendships and unforgettable memories that were also parts of the outcome from their voluntary service in Germany.

4.2.3 Geographical imaginaries

Among the photos shared by the participants in Group 2, the major themes or imageries emerged included nature, the snowy winter, the trains, ideas of sustainability, big celebrations, the people and international friendships.

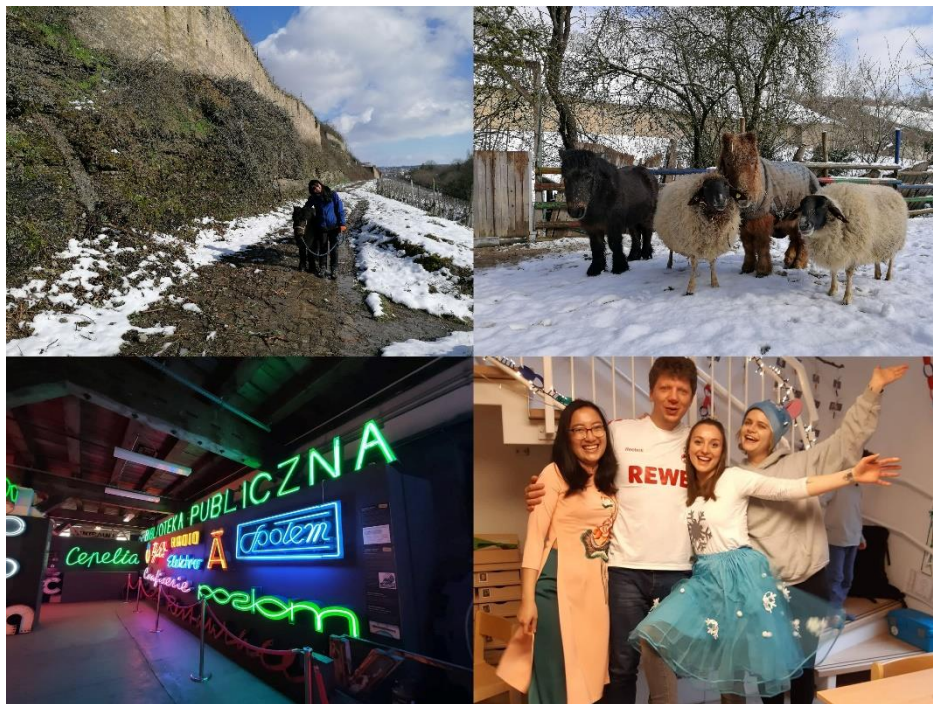


Figure 2. Four photos shared by Group 2 in the FGD

To start with, nature was one of the images discussed among the volunteers. They talked about how their trips in Germany and in Europe led them to beautiful nature scenes, and that

nature is an aspect of their experience in Germany. Hien shared the story of how she took the picture (Figure 3) on her train from Frankfurt to Bonn:

I choose this (the photo), because I like the atmosphere of the photo. It's another aspect of my life in Germany. I love traveling. Also I have become a big fan of the trains in Germany because they are so convenient, they are also a big factor in saving the planet. Also this is the amazing view that I randomly captured on my way from Frankfurt to Bonn. I was sitting by the window, on a train when I took it and it felt amazing.



Figure 3. Nature in Germany (taken by Hien, Vietnam, Group 2)

Following Hien, the other volunteers also shared their experience with Germany's nature, which was the "German winter". Jummy showed photos of her first snow day at the farm which she claimed to represent Europe:

This one shows my first snowing day on the farm. I see the reflection of the sun on the snow, which is very beautiful. I was surprised too because all animals were still alive, walking in the snow without feeling cold. Because it was my first snow day, I want to keep this picture. This means Europe for me." Hung, who also worked on a farm, shared her memories of the winter in Germany: "This is a random one that represents German winter. We had really thick snow. I think we have snow until May at my place. The snow was up to my hips. We had a really long winter break, we were just hanging out, making snowman.

Another image pinpointed by participants identified Germany as the country of sustainability or environment-friendliness. In the excerpt of Hien's story about her nature photo (Figure 3), she mentioned the trains, which she said to be a "big factor of saving the planet". Similarly, Thu mentioned "Pfand", the name for Germany's bottle return system, to be a "brilliant idea":

...there is one thing very clever about Germany and some other European countries that is the "Pfand" system where you return the bottles and receive money back, which really helps. There would be people who collect the bottles. So in a way, they clean up the trash. To me, it's a super intelligent, brilliant idea.

This image of Germany is aligned with what the volunteers had mentioned previously about their expectation before coming to Germany, as Hung, Hien and Yummy wanted to learn more about how the country managed climate change and sustainable living. It can be said that in the eyes of the volunteers, Germany is an advanced country that has a lot to learn from, which includes the aspect of sustainability. Besides, Angella engaged in the conversation with her previous imagination of Germany before coming and how her experience confirmed it:

(when I think about Germany) I would be thinking about this developed country. When I came there, I saw the roads, I saw the health system, the transportation system, and everything I had imagined was the same.

The human factor was one aspect that defined the volunteers' experience in Group 2. Indeed, it was talked about the most during the discussion as the volunteers were most eager to share their memories with their German colleagues and host families. In addition, they spoke openly about the images they used to have about German people and how the stereotypes were proven otherwise:

Before coming to Germany, I actually did not have that much of an idea of what Europe would be. I knew a little more about the US than Europe. But I imagined that the people there would be very open-minded, very developed. For example, before coming to Europe, I watched some videos about stereotypes about Germans, I saw that Germans are reserved, direct, sometimes too direct that you might think that they're rude. They're also on time, which I can confirm that they're not always so. They could totally be late for appointments. I imagined that Europe would be very clean, cleaner than Vietnam.
[Thu, Vietnam, Group 2]

For me, I didn't expect the kindness from European people or the western people because I had learned from before that they are very direct, they don't care much about you. But when I went there, they were very kind to me, and willing to help. But we have to say what we want and what we feel. [Jummy, Thailand, Group 2]

Apparently, after their voluntary service in Germany, their perception towards German people have been more positive. Nevertheless, there seems to be a certain level of generalization which can be seen from how they mentioned the 'German traits'. For instance, Angella described Germans as direct:

Something I didn't know before I came was how Germans behave. They're direct and sometimes too direct. I think it's a nice thing, but sometimes not. Also they're honest people. When they can help, they tell you. When they can't, they don't.

Besides, the volunteers also expressed their appreciation for the international friendships they made during their project and trips around Europe. Sharing one of her photos in which she was drinking and talking with her friends in Germany, Hien commented that her volunteer experience was filled with a lot of memories with her friends:

This is the one that represents the atmosphere, I like to party with my friends, and also meet new people. So this one is: new friends and partying. Also in this visit to our friends' in Bonn, we met two friends from Ukraine, and I learned a lot of new things about the Ukrainian culture, which is also another great thing about volunteering in Europe: meeting new friends and learning about their cultures, and partying with them.

Last but not least, big celebrations in Germany, such as Cologne's carnival and Christmas were a big theme in the discussion. The volunteers compared how different the celebrations were in Germany compared to their hometown, which created nice memories for them. Thu shared a photo of her first Christmas because she had never celebrated Christmas before coming to Germany, which she described to have changed the way she saw the world:

For the Christmas picture, if you compare celebrations of the West to the ones in the East, I think Christmas in the West is the most similar one to the New Year's Eve in the East. It's the special occasion when everyone gathers. I could see the difference between their New Year's (celebration) and ours. It broadened my mind of how I see the world. How open they (the Germans) were to welcome a foreigner like me to show me how

their culture was. It's the best way to experience it yourself, compared to seeing it on TV. I really cherish that experience, my first Christmas ever.

In her sharing, she mentioned how it was “the best way” to experience Christmas compared to seeing it on TV. This pointed out that Thu’s perception about Germany or Europe was more or less influenced by the media, which is similar to what Reggi pointed out in the FGD of Group 1. During the discussion, Thu confirmed that she had watched a lot of videos on YouTube about Germany and Germans before actually arriving there that might have left her a certain image about Germans.

4.2.4 Geography of compassion

The discussion continued with the mental mapping exercise to visualize their future volunteer destination. The volunteers pointed out different countries of their interests, yet the explanation or the criteria for their choices were more or less identical: the culture, the nature and the language. The volunteers pointed out the countries or areas where they knew to have interesting culture and exotic nature. For instance, both Hien and Thu chose Southern America and Africa because these continents possess beautiful nature and are rich in culture in their opinion. Regarding the language criteria, Angella wanted to go to an English speaking country, such as the USA, England or Australia because of her problems with communication in Germany.

For Hung’s case, however, her explanation was slightly different as she mentioned about some challenges in the Pacific islands which could be worked on. She elaborated that her choice was a combination of her personal interests, which was living by the ocean, and the needs of the community there.

Regarding the least interested countries or regions, the volunteers also pointed out the ones with political conflicts as a concern of their safety. Hien had a detailed explanation for her not going to war zones to volunteer:

If I had the opportunity, I think 60 percent of me would want to go, but 40 percent of me would concern about the safety. I want to live and experience more. Well, 60 percent of me would want to go and help people. The experience would change my mind.

The other reasons for their least interested places were languages and their level of interest about the culture of the places. For example, Thu did not prefer to go to France because she did not understand their French accent. Or Hien and Hung did not prefer to go to the USA because the metropolitan life did not seem exciting for them.

All in all, similar to Group 1, throughout the exercise, the volunteers did not focus much on the level of help needed in the host communities or how impactful their presence there would be. Instead, they concentrated more on the aspects of experience and novelty.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Geographical imaginaries: Global South's perspectives

The two FGDs have led to the emergence of a number of geographical imaginaries among IVs who took part in the research. The participants' geographical imaginaries can be reflected back to the debates raised in the literature presented in Chapter 2. This section will go through each significant geographical imaginary emerged in the research, along with their implications and possible explanations.

To begin with, the ideal of a 'modern world' was the most recognizable image emerged in the two groups. The term "modern world" was repeatedly used by one of the volunteers in Group 1, which comprises a series of images brought forward during both of the FGDs. On the part of IV – from their motivation of learning to their description of Germany as a country of urban landscapes, high technology, and advanced systems – there seems to be a certain level of assumption towards the legitimization of whatever knowledge and reality presented to them in Germany. Besides, while having agreed on the notion of volunteering as a give-and-take mechanism, the volunteers struggled to point out their contributions to their host community but found it exciting to talk about what they had observed or acquired from Germany. In the eyes of the ongoing volunteers, Germany was a place that had plenty of knowledge to offer.

...I want to add on my experience in the modern world, so that's why I got interested in this project. And I want to get more skills and knowledge about the modern agriculture.
[Reggi, Uganda, Group 1]

They held many images of Germany as well as German qualities in a high ground, such as the social welfare for people with special needs, the convenient train system, or Germans' direct character and honesty as mentioned by the participants in the two groups. For instance, Yemisi from Nigeria (Group 1) called her experience as an "eye opener", or Angella saw her 13 months in Germany to be "life-changing". Apparently, from their intonation of speech to the use of expressions, Germany in the eyes of the volunteers appeared uniquely with admirable qualities. In other words, we can see that there was a certain level of glorification towards the Global South behind such descriptions.

Many participants expressed their desire to bring what they have learned from Germany to their home country, which was aligned with one of the original goals of IV, that is skills

transfer, in order to fill the gaps of development in the developing world (Rockcliffe, 2005). Such skills transfer is often seen among the trips of Global North's volunteers to the South, in which the volunteers legitimize their knowledge of Others that reinforces uneven development, according to Simpson (2005). It is due to the imperial legacy established in the volunteer tourism within the North, that sees themselves as the sole righteous actor (Tester, 2010). However, here in this research, such mindset persists, while it seems that the role is reverse as the volunteers from the South come to provide their social service to the North. The participants apparently put themselves in the hierarchy where they are learners from the generous Global North.

For me when I think of volunteering in Europe, or when someone in Uganda asks me how volunteering in Europe is, I would really recommend them to come here and experience what I experienced. I really had fun, I met people, I've grown. It is a really good experience. I really thank the German government because in my country, it's not easy to get a visa to Germany. But when you are a volunteer, you get this visa so fast. I really thank the government to have made it easy for the volunteers to come. It's not just volunteering, but it is life changing. [Angella, Uganda, Group 2]

Furthermore, the volunteers' geographical imaginary consistently reflects a homogenous picture of Germany or even Europe as the volunteers of both groups had the tendency to essentialize certain elements of their host country throughout the discussions. In particular, besides the above mentioned cosmopolitan images of the country, the characteristics of German people were generally depicted as "honest", "direct", or "minding their own business". Many times, the element of culture was referred as one single entity that was shared with the volunteers from their host community through daily interactions or big celebrations.

For the Christmas picture, if you compare celebrations of the West to the ones in the East, I think Christmas in the West is the most similar one to the New Year's Eve in the East. It's the special occasion when everyone gathers. I could see the difference between their New Year's (celebration) and ours. It broadened my mind of how I see the world. How open they (the Germans) were to welcome a foreigner like me to show me how their culture was. It's the best way to experience it yourself, compared to seeing it on TV. I really cherish that experience, my first Christmas ever. [Thu, Vietnam, Group 2]

Such claim is an example of the essentialization of the culture of places, which is “an attempt at simplifying and reducing cultural complexity into core enduring elements”, which reduces the richness of the cultures of places (Caprioli et al., 2021, p. 347). The volunteer had previously been exposed to certain images and ideas on television about the Western cultures, i.e. Christmas celebration, and used them as a reference point for experience. Hence, we can see how it is connected with the result of ideologically infused representations of places on media that have driven the essentializing act. (Caprioli et al., 2021, p. 347).

Additionally, from their references of the media’s depiction of Germany, especially from movies, it can be said that IV experiences appear to be an encounter with the geographical imaginaries that are inflated by the movie industries (Costa, 2012):

...it's something you've always seen on the internet, on TV, and now you reach the place and you think: Wow, I take the picture of the place to keep the memory and for the future, you can say 'I was in this place' and show proof. So it's like to bring a picture into reality. So we had images before coming to Germany and we reach and we see the images. It's like you're watching a movie and now you're in the movie. [Reggi, Uganda, Group 1]

The movie industries have been influential in individuals’ perceptions of places. Filmmakers make use of the geographical space in order to construct their narratives and contribute to influence the perception of the ‘real world’ (Costa, 2012).

Another worth-noting point is the fact that no aspect of altruism was talked about as a motivation during the discussion, while the dominant reasons were mainly correlated with tourism, such as the aspects of experience and novelty. This reminds us of the ‘maps of compassion’ pinpointed by Mostafanezhad (2013) as the prominent constituent of IV’s geographical imaginaries. In the ‘maps of compassion’, altruism is one vital factor where an object of compassion is present (Mostafanezhad, 2013). Specifically, the geographer describes how volunteers pin places on the global map based on their perceived degrees of how much a place is deprived and therefore ‘needy’ for international volunteers. Such altruism, however, creates a dichotomy of ‘us’ versus ‘them’ since it presumes that ‘they’ need ‘our’ help in order to get out of the ‘underdevelopment’ state. Such perception of ‘underdevelopment’ or ‘development’ is a common homogenized and westernized approach (Ziai, 2007). Yet, in this study, while it did not appear that the volunteers perceive Germany as a place in need of help,

the fact that they highly viewed the country as a ‘modern world’, a place of ‘development’ to learn and explore, can also indicate a dichotomy of ‘us’ versus ‘them’: ‘we’ need to learn from ‘them’ to reach ‘development’. It seems that the Global South volunteers’ perception of development is too influenced by the common homogenized Global North’s approach to ‘development’.

5.2 Unrelenting ‘Othering’ processes

As the study investigated the geographical imaginaries of the South-to-North volunteers, it was expected that the Global North’s perspective would open a different path different from the dominant Global North’s ideology of the world, especially the ‘Othering’ process. Yet, the Global South’s response showed that such orientalist narrative persists: the Global North appears as modern, advanced and civilized as mentioned in the previous sections.

‘Othering’ process is defined by Said (1978) as a geographical, historical and cultural constructed concept of depicting ‘others’ as exotic from a western-centric point of view, where other cultures are perceived as peculiar as opposed to their own culture, which is regarded as more civilized and superior. As pointed out earlier, the Global South’s volunteers also adopted such view of the world from the Global North. They put themselves within the ‘development’ sphere of the Global North, supposing that they are learners from the generous Global North, instead of subjects the Global North could learn from.

One statement of the previous volunteers from Group 2 seems to have opened a new trajectory of the discussion where a different view towards the Global North could be witnessed.

I also got to witness some very abnormal working styles of Germans that I came into contact with. Not all Germans are well organized nor they follow the rule. Not all Germans are cold, but they have more sentimental sides that they tend to show more emotions. That’s what I saw in Germany and I think it was a very interesting experience.
[Hien, Vietnam, Group 2]

However, looking closely into the statement and how it was said with astonishment (“a very interesting experience”), we can see, such observations come from a certain precedent

homogenous image about Germans' working styles and characteristics where the image was not "abnormal". When placed in the context of the whole discussion, such observations were insignificant compared to the other images about Germany as a 'modern world'.

Such geographical imaginaries originate from a persisting spatialized heritage of injustice, particularly colonization and neoliberal accumulation by dispossession, as well as the vexing formation of the 'Third World' underpinned by spatialized power segregation (Buck-Morss, 2009). Furthermore, the Global North is commonly seen as the core, with the rest regarded as the periphery; consequently, as seen in IV, the dominant voice belongs to the North (Atkinson, 2017). This reflects in how the participants in FGDs perceived Germany in glorification, amazement, with the great desire to learn and absorb the German cultures.

In addition, Simpson (2005) illuminated on the fact that IV is promoted in developing worlds by the developed ones under a very narrow scope that is influenced by the western lenses and beliefs. In this argument, the role of media is significant as it is a mean for transmitting certain spatial imaginaries. In the FGDs, social media and movies were mentioned many times since they were the media where the volunteers first received their information about Germany.

5.3 The shadow of neoliberalism

One aspect of the IV experience raised by the South-to-North volunteers was the explorative motivation or their desire for a "gap year". The volunteers embarked on their voluntary trip in Germany with the hope of exploring their inner self, as well as exploring the world. Hereby, we can find the paradoxical nature of IV.

I think volunteering is a good opportunity to travel as well, especially in Europe where you can go to several countries. For me, it's more like a personal experience, a gap year to understand more myself, and what to do next. (Hung from Vietnam)

This statement suggests that the desire of the volunteer to engage with IV was connected with the motives for tourism, which often holds the self-serving connotations of leisure (Atkinson, 2017). In this case, her desire to experience Europe did not stem from the geographical imaginary of Germany or Europe as a place that is in need of help but as a tourist destination.

However, although in some respects, tourism could be categorized as self-serving, according to Scheyvens (2010) and Sherradan (2008), IV is not necessarily egocentric. Such motivation for IV is paradoxical in the sense that it could effectively and simultaneously serve two seemingly opposite purposes: service to others and tourism for the self.

The close relations between IV and tourism can also be underlined when Jummy, a volunteer from Thailand compared her volunteer experience with her solo backpacking experience in her home country. From here, we can reflect back to the complexity of IV in its combination with tourism, or the so-called “voluntourism” – a concept that is usually put in comparison with volunteering for development. However, the definitions of voluntourism in academia has been Global North-centric since it concerns only one direction of traveling, where privileged volunteers from developed countries go to developing ones. Specifically, voluntourism is defined as an “alternative form of tourism in which tourists spend time volunteering as part of their vacation in a developing country” (Sin, 2009, p. 480). McGloin and Georgeou (2015) offered their own conceptualization of volunteer tourism, focusing on a profit-driven feature. According to these scholars, volunteer tourism is “an economic activity”, where North-based tour operators receive money to send people to developing countries to obtain “meaningful” experiences. Yet, these definitions raise the question of whether there is the need to expand the concept to be inclusive of the Global South’s experience.

On another note, the concept of a ‘gap year’ was also mentioned many times in the FGDs. The gap year was presented in relation with their volunteers’ motivation of self-discovery and self-development. The gap year, however, is initially a North-based concept to describe young privileged people who take on a trip with the hope of returning with positive changes. Many volunteer programs have been born, promoted with the gap year concept and its benefits such as the idea of global citizenship, CV building, professional development and individual autonomy. The exchanges of the volunteers during FGDs have shown that the Global South has adopted the ideas, evidently in their motivations of self-enhancement, such as:

For me, when I do volunteering and anything related, I would enhance my networking skills. You use that network to help with your future career, your study, you can never know. [Thu, Vietnam, Group 2]

The above statement is reflective of a mindset that assumes IV as a practice that is naturally productive and a worthy attempt to experience different cultures and other countries in a global economy. Hence, it underlines the presence of a neoliberalist ideology in IV experience. According to McGloin and Georgeou (2015), the rapid expansion of volunteer groups is to be particularly connected to the ascent of neoliberalism as the dominant rationale behind modern development practices, which seems to not exclude the Global South's volunteers.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Answers to the research questions

To begin with, the Global South's IV who took part in the research perceive Germany as a representation of the Global North, where this equals the "modern world". This geographical imaginary is composed of images of urban landscapes, high technology, and advanced systems. This has been shown not only through IV's descriptions of the images they have elaborated in their host country, but also through IV's way of expressing their amazement and humbleness with reference to what they actually encountered in Germany. This reactions indicate a certain level of glorification and desire towards such a world of wonder. Even before traveling, IV had long held the idea of locating their volunteering experience in a developed country where they could learn and develop themselves. This way, IV apparently put themselves in the hierarchy where they are learners from the generous Global North, instead of subjects the Global North could learn from.

When compared with the geographical imaginaries of IVs from the Global North in existing literature, it was expected that there would be a response against the Global North-centric ideology of the current world, and especially against the long standing 'Othering' process that is intrinsic to it. Yet, while investigating the geographical imaginaries of the South-to-North volunteers, it seems that the orientalist narrative persists: the Global North appears as modern, advanced and civilized with legitimized lessons to learn from. For instance, volunteering in the Global North is centred on learning and gaining practical experiences to the Global South's volunteers. This idea shows that there is a certain level of assumption towards the legitimization of knowledge and experiences presented to them in the host country that will be transferred back to their hometown.

Furthermore, the volunteers' geographical imaginary consistently reflects a homogenous picture of Germany or even Europe as the volunteers of both groups had the tendency to essentialize certain elements of their host country, i.e. the element of culture referred as one single entity that was shared with the volunteers from their host community. Homogenous spatial imaginaries are inflated by the media's depiction of the Global North, especially from movies as the result of ideologically infused representations of places on media.

Such geographical imaginaries emerge from a persistent spatialized legacy of injustice, namely colonization, and neoliberal accumulation by dispossession, as well as the troublesome creation of the 'Third World' ascended by a spatialized power segregation (Buck-Morss, 2009). Furthermore, the Global North is typically regarded as the core, with the remainder regarded as the peripheral; thus, as seen in IV, the dominating voice belongs to the North and is regarded as the "truth" (Atkinson, 2017).

Moreover, the IV experience was found closely related with neoliberalist ideology of the gap year concept, which is also dominant among the Global North's international volunteers. Volunteers from the Global South are not excluded from the idea of traveling with productive outcomes, where they develop themselves and expand their network. Apparently, IV is a practice that is naturally productive and a worthy attempt to experience different cultures and other countries in a global economy. Hence, it underlines the presence of a neoliberalist ideology in IV experience.

In addition, upon the above discussion on the geographical imaginaries of IVs from the Global South, it can be said that the international volunteers do not perceive Germany as a place in need of help but a place to learn and explore. While altruism is one vital factor where an object of compassion is present, no aspect of altruism was talked about by the volunteers. Hence, it raises the question of whether the Global South is drawing another 'map of compassion' or it is merely an alternative form of tourism.

6.2 Recommendations

From the research findings and discussion, it is evident that more in-depth research must be done on the IV experience of different forms and directions, as well as its implications in international development. As demonstrated, IV is a complex phenomenon that harbours various complications of different ideologies. The legacies of imperialism and orientalist narratives that centres around the Global North are evident. In the study, although the voice is given to the silenced Global South, it is still echoing the hierarchy of power that favours the powerful North. Therefore, it is critical to have a wider awareness of delinking from a western-centric way of thinking to move forward decolonial justice.

Moreover, the link between IV and tourism, or voluntourism, should also be considered critically as it can misguide the original purpose of volunteering, which is altruism. Since the 'gap year' practice is becoming more widespread with countless international volunteer programs, more paradoxes of the moral dilemma will be introduced in the way that international volunteering experience is marketed to be a commodity to be sold worldwide. While this does not mean that voluntourism is only adverse, it is important to carefully examine the movement with its impact on the global justice agendas in order to address structural inequalities. Hence, it will be a valuable contribution to the literature for future research to look into such neoliberal shadowing in the IV experience of the Global South.

Lastly, as an implication for self-reflection, it is also important for each individual to be conscious of their own geographical imaginaries. Because of the fact that Global North's media is almost unavoidable, especially when it comes to entertainment industries and social media, one might be exposed to a very narrow scope that is influenced by the western lenses and beliefs. Hence, not taking for granted of those influences is helpful in shaping one's own reality in a more open, inclusive manner.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

ANNEX 2. CONSENT FORM

ANNEX 1

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

This focus group discussion serves to collect data for my master thesis at the University of Padua, Italy. The discussion will go about your international volunteer motivations and experience in Germany, as well as your opinions on international volunteering in general. The outcome of the discussion will be strictly used for the research project. As I have your permission, the discussion will be recorded.

OPENING QUESTIONS

For the current volunteers' group	For the former volunteers' group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is your project? - What is your role in your project? - What motivated you about your project and volunteering in Germany? - What do you expect to benefit from your project and your volunteer time in Germany? - What will the project benefit from your presence in your opinion? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was your project? - What was your role in your project? - What had motivated you about your project and volunteering in Germany? - What did you benefit from your project and your volunteer time in Germany? - What did the project benefit from your presence in your opinion?

KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ASKED WITH THE SUPPLEMENT OF PHOTOS SHARED BY THE PARTICIPANTS AND MENTAL MAPPING EXERCISE

- What does volunteering mean to you?
- What does volunteering in Germany or Europe mean to you?
- When thinking about volunteering in Germany/Europe, what images come to your mind?
- What are such images influenced by?
- Where are you most interested to volunteer next and why?
- What are you least interested to volunteer next and why?

ANNEX 2



CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Reshaping 'Maps of Compassion' through International Volunteering.
Learning from Global South

Researcher: Ngoc Anh Duong

		Please initial box
1	I confirm that I have read and have understood the information sheet dated for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions, and have had these answered satisfactorily.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, without my rights being affected.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	I understand that, under the Data Protection Act, I can at any time ask for access to the information I provide and I can also request the destruction of that information if I wish.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	I agree to take part in the above study.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	I give permission for the transcript of my interview and my photos to be used for research purposes only (including research publications and reports)	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential. I understand that I have the right to anonymity. I assign copyright of my transcript to Ngoc Anh Duong, who may quote the transcript under my first name.	<input type="checkbox"/>

<hr style="width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Participant Name</p>	<hr style="width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Date</p>	<hr style="width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Signature</p>
<hr style="width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Researcher Name</p>	<hr style="width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Date</p>	<hr style="width: 80%; margin: 0 auto;"/> <p>Signature</p>

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