“To help others” -
An explorative case study about how help is described and defined by volunteer tourists working with children and teenagers in Brazil.

Author: Ingrid Häggblom
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Tutor: Johan Gärde
Examinator: Johan von Essen
Abstract: Volunteer tourism is a popular way for young Westerners to discover the world and at the same take on the role as an international aid worker. For a short time they get an opportunity to improve the life conditions of people in development countries and get to know a new culture. The discourse of “making a difference” is dominating the marketing and promotion of the volunteer trips, yet little research is to be found about what the volunteers contribute with and what “help”, provided by them consist of. The main purpose of this study was to explore eventual post-colonial legacies or structures in the practice of volunteer tourism by exploring how help, in the actual context is described and defined by the volunteer tourists themselves. The thesis is based on a field study, conducted during two months in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Data was collected through 14 semi-structured interviews with volunteer tourists and observations at the volunteer sites. The data was further analysed by using terms and perspectives from post-colonial theory. The analysis show that the help from the volunteer tourists principally were supposed to compensate for deficiencies in the host community and that it was directed towards individual advancement for the kids that the volunteers encountered in the projects. Tendencies that the help-actions sometimes were based on assumptions, rather than facts about the conditions in the host community were also identified. Furthermore that the actions taken on by the volunteers sometimes implied simplified notions on ways to achieve development.

Key terms: Volunteer tourism, help, aid, development, Brazil, post-colonialism
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Preface

In 2004, when I was nineteen years old I travelled to Brazil to work as a volunteer in a project for children and teenagers in a shantytown in Fortaleza. The trip was my first experience of Latin America and of developing countries. My six months in Brazil was for sure a great experience that, since then has generated many positive things in my life. A few years later, (maybe not wiser but older) with a bachelor degree in social work I started to reflect upon my volunteer experience from Brazil from another point of view than I first did when I travelled there. While studying the complexity of helping people at the bachelor program in social work I gained some new perspectives that changed my view of the project I worked with in Brazil.

When visiting Brazil in 2013 I met Katia, the ex-manager of the project (that was closed down in 2012). We talked about old memories and she showed me photos from the project. Some of the photos portrayed the children that had participated in the activities that we organized in 2004. Katia were pointing at some of the photos and asked me if I remembered this boy or that girl? She also told me about whom of the children that had become drug addicts, prostitutes or had passed away before the age of twenty-five. Tragically the number of children that had faced miserable destinies was high. Here I have to make clear that I do not intend to accuse the project for the tragic destinies of those children, there are other reasons and conditions in the Brazilian society that can be blamed for that. This experience made me however question whether the project made any difference for those children at all?

I find it important to share this experience since I believe it can explain my interest in volunteer tourism and my somewhat critical view on volunteer projects in developing countries that exists, usually for short periods of time. I think the volunteer tourists sometimes benefit more from these projects, compared to the local people. My experience from Fortaleza inspired me to conduct this study and I hope it can contribute with some more knowledge about the phenomenon volunteer tourism as a whole.
Introduction

The phenomenon called volunteer tourism or voluntourism, has grown a lot the last 20 years (Jonsson, 2012). The most frequently used definition of volunteer tourism is formulated by Wearing (2001:1):

…volunteer tourism applies to those tourists who, for various reasons, volunteer in an organized way to undertake holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment.

It was estimated that a total of 1.6 million people, worldwide participated in some type of volunteer tourism since the beginning of the 1990s. Volunteer tourism has also become a lucrative industry. In 2008 the estimated revenue for volunteer tourism was between 1.1 and 1.3 billion Euro (Tourism Research & Marketing, 2008).

Anyone interested, regardless previous experience or professional background, can travel as a volunteer tourist. The largest group are, though, young men and women from western countries, wanting to do a so-called, gap year before or after a work period or studies at the university. Many volunteer tourists go abroad with a wish to make a difference and to experience something new and exciting. According to Jonsson (2012) some also hope that the new experience will give them an advantage in the competition for a future job as well.

When volunteer tourism started to grow there were mainly a few and well-known NGO’s that arranged the trips. Today, there is a wide range of companies and/or organizations, both non-profits and for-profits, that arranges volunteer tourism trips. The volunteer tourist can perform almost any type of activity at the volunteer site, which, normally is located in a development country in Asia, Africa or Latin America (McGhee, 2014). Work with children, educational activities, community development or nature preservation is common areas for a volunteer commitment.

What distinguishes volunteer tourism from other type of volunteer work is that the volunteer pay a fee to conduct the work, and the trip normally is combined with more conventional tourist activities, such as sightseeing or sun bathing. The fee that the tourist pay is related to the time spent at the volunteer project, it normally covers simple accommodation and sometimes meals during the stay. A part of the fee is donated to the NGO/ project were the volunteer tourist work. Commercial agencies that sell/arrange volunteer tourist trips normally charge more than the non-governmental organizations (NGO’s) or social projects that accept volunteers directly.

There is a lot of published research about volunteer’s experiences of their trips to developing countries (Zahra, 2011; Otoo & Amuquandoh, 2014). The research covers the relationship between the host community and the volunteers (Hammersley, 2014; Vodopivec
& Jaffe, 2011) and the motivational factors making people want to sign up for volunteer trips (Wearing, 2001; Brown, 2005). A range of studies criticizing volunteer tourism arrangements for benefiting the volunteers more than the communities that host them have also been carried out (Benson, 2011; Palacios, 2010). Less research can be found about the actual work that the volunteer tourists conduct, what the work actually consists of and what the outcome is (Kennedy & Dornan, 2009).

According to Jonsson (2012) the role of the international aid worker has changed along with the entry of commercial volunteer trips. To go abroad as a volunteer is no longer something you have to motivate with altruistic intentions since the individualistic ones, such as “the will to experience a country in a non-touristic way” nowadays are accepted and legitimate (ibid.). This is also discussed by Snead & Söderman (2008) who have identified motivational factors among volunteer tourists when choosing an organization where to conduct their volunteer work. Among the nine different motivational factors presented in the article none speaks about an opportunity to help or to make a difference. In other words, the “aid mission” does not seem to be the central focus when going on a volunteer trip. This is not distinctive for volunteer tourists since individualistic motives and reasons, rather than altruistic ones, are common among people engaged in other types of volunteer work as well (Wuthnow, 1991).

Regardless individual motives and reasons to conduct volunteer work in a development country, the organizations and projects that receive foreign volunteers makes part of the field of international aid work and international development (Jonsson, 2012). The aim of the organizations that receive foreign volunteer tourists is in general- to contribute to development and to help, protect and prevent problems for their “clients” (Wearing, 2001). The opportunity to help – “to make a difference” is also a central part of what the commercial volunteer agencies are selling (Wearing, 2001; Simpson, 2004; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011; Palacios, 2010; Vrasti, 2013). This indicates that the volunteer trip include some kind of action that aims for change or improvement. The aid aspect is therefore still relevant when talking about volunteer tourism and cannot totally be set aside even if its not necessarily the main goal or motivation for people who combine travelling with volunteer work.

So if “aid” still plays a role in the context of volunteer tourism one can ask what it consists of? What kind of actions do the volunteer tourists actually perform in order to satisfy the needs of the host community? These questions are normally left without or alternatively, with unspecified answers in the promotion of volunteer tourism (Simpson, 2004).

Palacios (2010) mean that the questions about whether the help of foreign volunteers have any impact on the development of poor nations have been less visible in research and the debate. Instead researchers and other stakeholders have asked whether the volunteers “possess the necessary capacities and motivations to produce effective help” (Palacios, 2010:863). This
can be interpreted as an implicit assumption that the volunteers actually can contribute to development if they just obtain the right conditions.

Simpson means that the industry selling volunteer experiences is “dominated by simplistic binaries of us and them” (Simpson, 2004:690) and that it lacks deeper understanding about poverty and global injustice and the causes to it. An assumption that development can occur solely through ”good intentions” and the presence of volunteer tourists from Western countries therefore exists in this context (Simpson, 2004; Jakubiak. 2012). Regardless of education and previous experience the volunteer tourist is seen as a “helper” that can make a difference in the host community. This notion puts the volunteer tourist in a superior position; whatever he or she does, it is considered as something good and since the local community is so needy and under-developed any help from the volunteer tourist will be a contribution (Jakubiak. 2012).

To help someone is often, even outside the context of volunteer tourism, seen as an altruistic and “good” action and is therefore seldom questioned. The “good will” is enough to consider the aid action as something noble, regardless of what it results in. Skau (2006) mean though that a help action always is connected to power in some way - to help is also to wield power. To “help” under-developed and “wild” natives was a central part of the European colonization of countries in the global South, for example through missionary work. As the history has shown did that “help project” also partly lead to immense cruelty, exploitation and oppression of the people in the colonised countries.

Jonsson (2012) means that similar structures, as those in the former colonies in the global South still can be found today in the relation between the volunteer tourist and the “help receiver” in the context of international aid work. Can these structures be found in the way that the help, in the context of volunteer tourism is described and defined as well? What kind of help do the volunteer tourists expect to provide during their volunteer trip and why? When looking at the concept of help and the actions that are considered as help, postcolonial theory can be useful when analysing the relationship between ”the helper” and the receiver of the help since it can disclose eventual power aspects.

**Research question and purpose**

The main purpose of this study is to explore eventual post-colonial legacies or structures in the practice of volunteer tourism by exploring how help, in the actual context is described and defined by the volunteer tourists.

The research question to answer is, as follows:

How is help described and defined in the context of volunteer tourism by the volunteer tourists themselves?
The idea is to explore this matter by investigating how volunteer tourists themselves define, describe and motivate what they do to “make a difference” and “to help” while working as volunteers.

To provide “help” is an action that is shaped in relation to the needs of the help-receivers. When analysing how help in volunteer tourism is described and defined, the view of the help receiver determines which help that is required and what the help should consist of. The focus will therefore be on how volunteer tourists, in relation to their view on the people that their work is directed to, define and motivate the help.

The post-colonial theoretical framework can be used for a critical analysis of the relationship between the help-giver and the help-receiver (Jonsson, 2012) and I partly aim to use the theory for that purpose in this study. To be able to answer the research question and fulfil the above stated purpose I attempt to answer the following questions:

- Which needs do the volunteer tourists identify in the context of the project where they work?
- Which actions, aiming to meet the needs, are carried out by the volunteer tourists.

**Focus area**

In an interview with Swedish Television (SVT’s homepage, 2016-06-02) do Annika Billing, program manager of the SOS Children’s Villages criticise the industry of volunteer tourism particularly in the area of childcare. She mentions examples where poor parents are convinced to put their children at orphanages with promises of a better future for them. By doing this the orphanages can meet the demand of western volunteers wanting to conduct volunteer work with vulnerable children. The growing number of volunteers that wants to work with orphans has lead to an increase of orphanages all over the world and the orphanages receiving the volunteer tourists makes good money on fees paid by them. The problem is that they sometimes are taking care of children that actually could have stayed home with their parents, says Billing.

According to Billing, the children have become a commodity at a market. The volunteer tourists normally stay at the orphanage for a short time, sometimes only a day or a week. The children are therefore not guaranteed continuity in their everyday-life and the possibility to a secure and stable relation with a grown-up, components that are essential for a child’s wellbeing. An issue that have been stressed in published research as well (Richter & Norman, 2010). Billing mean that the volunteer tourists need to ask themselves what they can contribute with during such a visit and furthermore, that short-term visits in general should be avoided.
A volunteer tourist can choose to conduct various kinds of volunteer work. Natural preservation such as saving turtles or planting trees are common tasks for a volunteer tourist. In this study I have chosen to focus on volunteer tourist organizations that works with socially vulnerable children and teenagers in Brazil. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, I have an academic background as a social worker, which makes this kind of volunteer work more interesting for me on a personal level. Secondly, I do find volunteer tourism, related to the area of social work as humans are the objective of aid, a bit more complicated and complex than other types of volunteer work, such as saving turtles, for reasons addressed in the interview with Annika Billing, that I referred to above.

To improve the outcome of volunteer tourism organizations, more research is required about the work that is conducted within the organizations by the volunteers (Kennedy & Dornan, 2009). Considering the children and teenagers all over the world that are supposed to get access to a safe environment and supportive adults through a civil society organization it is important to highlight what the aid directed to them actually consists of, how it is shaped and why, and the consequences of that process. Volunteer tourists only perform parts of that work and my contribution will be an analysis of this specific area. As with all research one needs to start somewhere and focus on one aspect at the time to be able to see the bigger pattern further on. By investigating the help that is “produced” in the context of volunteer tourism the ambition is also to contribute to a deeper comprehension and knowledge about the phenomenon as a whole.

The study was conducted between March and May 2015 during a field study in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil being a popular destination for volunteer tourists.
Central concepts – definitions

Volunteer tourism

Studies and analysis of conventional mass tourism has omitted its high impact on cultural and natural environments across the world. This has pushed people to search for a better “choice” which in turn has resulted in different forms of alternative tourism (Lyons & Stephen, 2008). When people require a new form of tourism that is authentic and that can give something back to the host community such phenomena as volunteer tourism can emerge (Wearing, 2001).

Whether alternative tourism, such as volunteer tourism has gone through a commodification process and become just another product on the market of tourism have though been discussed (Lyons & Wearing, 2008). Volunteer tourism is however still seen by many as an alternative, non-consumptive way of traveling where the tourist can contribute to sustainable development and solutions to social and environmental issues in communities all over the world (Lyons & Wearing, 2008; Wearing, 2001).

Since volunteer tourism has been considered as a form of alternative and sustainable travelling it has, mainly been investigated by researchers affiliated in the area of tourism. Many consider it as a successor of eco tourism that was popular during the 1980s and early 1990s (McGhee, 2014). Jonsson (2012) on the contrary, mean that the development of commercial volunteer tourism should be understood in relation to international aid work since the emergence of volunteer tourism can be explained by the high status that international aid work has reached in many countries. The fact that people travel to poor countries to perform aid work voluntarily or for a small economic compensation is not a new phenomenon. What is new is that commercial agencies have adopted this concept and started to sell it. The high status of international aid work made a commodification process of it possible since people obviously were, and still are willing to pay to be able to perform such work. Due to the fact that international aid work is such a well-known phenomena for people it could change to another organisational context (to the context of tourism) without obstructions (Jonsson, 2012). According to Jonsson (ibid.) should volunteer tourism therefore be understood as a part of the field of international aid work and as a phenomenon that needs to be understood in relation to former types of international aid and volunteer work and not only as a form of alternative tourism.

Reasons to go abroad to perform aid work has changed over time, so has the destinations. Jonsson (ibid.) illustrates the development towards commercial volunteer trips in Sweden in the figure below. The model illustrates general types of aid work, the reasons for it and the typical destination for aid workers during specific epochs. The model does, of course
show a simplified version of a more diverse and complex reality and as it is designed, based on the development in Sweden the application of it in other contexts should be treated with caution. However, I do believe that it is, to some extent applicable in a European context.

Figure 1: Generations of aid workers and the geography of international aid work between 19th – 21th centuries.

(Jonsson, 2012).

Since the purpose of this study is to explore the concept of help within the context of volunteer tourism, I have chosen to take on Jonsson’s perspective on volunteer tourism and consider it as a part of international aid work. I find that it applies better since it is more focused on the aid work- aspect of volunteer tourism and the actions performed in the context compared to the approach, “volunteer tourism as sustainable tourism”.

In this thesis I frequently use the term volunteer tourist when referring to people that are or have participated in some kind of volunteer tourist arrangement. I see volunteer tourists as actors in the field of international development but also, as actors in the civil society (specific for this study, the Brazilian civil society). This definition might be questioned due to disagreements about which impact volunteer tourists really have on the local society. Regardless what kind of impact their work might have, they are still present and perform a kind of development work why I think that they must be considered as actors in this field.
Help

Help can refer to an action as well as an object. As a noun help is defined as: “an act of helping, aid or assistance, relief or succor” and as a verb: “to give or provide what is necessary to accomplish a task or satisfy a need, contribute strength or means to, render assistance to, cooperate effectively with, aid or assist” (dictionary.reference.com).

During the writing of this thesis I have struggled with the choice of whether I should use the term help or aid. Aid as a noun can be defined as: “help, support or assistance” and as a verb: “to give help or assistance”. After several evaluations I decided to mainly use the term “help” since the study is focused on “the act of helping”. On some occasions, due to linguistic limitations, the term aid has though been used, for example when talking about “aid work”. To simplify for the reader and myself and avoid confusion, I want to make clear that I use both terms without adding any different meaning to them.

I use help as an analytical term in this study, meaning that it is my definition of help that is used. In the analysis I pick out quotes and sayings from the interview material and headline it as a form of help. It is therefore not a general definition of the concept that is used but a subjective one. “Help” in this study and according to my definition of it, is performed as a form of aid/development work. Help in such a context can include physical, material, social, practical and economical support or seek to change the behavior of the help receiver (Jonsson, 2012; Wallin Weihe, 1999).

Reasons to help and what help in the context of international aid work includes, in terms of actions and approaches does though change along with trends in the surrounding society (Jonsson, 2012). To simplify for myself I decided to see help as an action that aims to improve or develop something. The action shall in some way change a situation to the better for the “help receiver”.

When help is directed to another person it is formed after the needs of the help receiver, not saying that the “giver” always interpret the needs of the receiver correctly. Skau (2006) means that giving help creates a linkage between the giver and the receiver and that help always is connected to power in some way, an action of help is also an action of power. The relation between the giver and the receiver of the help is therefore relevant to explore to understand “help” in a certain context. This aspect is therefore included in the empirical data and in the analysis for the study.
**NGOs**

Volunteer tourism is always performed within the frames of some kind of organization. The organization can normally be classified as a non-governmental organization, an NGO. To find a simple and absolute definition of the term NGO is though difficult.

“A non-governmental organization (NGO) is any non-profit, voluntary citizens' group which is organized on a local, national or international level. Task-oriented and driven by people with a common interest, NGOs perform a variety of service and humanitarian functions, bring citizen concerns to Governments, advocate and monitor policies and encourage political participation through provision of information. Some are organized around specific issues, such as human rights, environment or health. They provide analysis and expertise, serve as early warning mechanisms and help monitor and implement international agreements. (www.ngo.org).

In this study, NGOs working with children and teenagers are in focus. In the text I use the terms NGO, social project and community project/centre when describing the organizations that I visited during the field study. Different terms are used to separate them from each other but I do not add any different meaning to them, I might as well have used the term NGO for all of them. NGOs that receive volunteer tourists do sometimes receive them directly at the site and offer accommodation and other services to the volunteer tourist.

Other organizations central for this study are the volunteer tourism agencies that mediate volunteer placements at different NGOs/projects for the volunteer tourists. I am not using the term NGO for these organizations even though they support social development by providing volunteers and financial support through the volunteer tourists and the fees that they pay. The volunteer tourism agencies do sometimes receive volunteer tourist through a company that sell volunteer trips. The volunteer tourism agencies are normally located in the host country and are available for the volunteer tourist during their stay (Jonsson, 2012). Travel agencies or companies profiled towards volunteer tourism does not either run NGOs by themselves. They buy volunteer placements from volunteer tourism agencies in the host countries or directly from an NGO.

A more in-depth presentation of the NGOs and other organizations that I visited during this study will follow under “Presentation of organizations/projects” below.
**Previous research**

In the following section I have made an attempt to summarize relevant research about volunteer tourism. To simplify for the reader, the review is categorized into different sections.

**Volunteer tourism – part of various fields**

Researchers affiliated in the research field of tourism have produced a lot of research about volunteer tourism and the phenomena has therefore been considered and treated mainly as a form of alternative tourism (Wearing, 2002; Wearing & Lyons, 2008; Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011, Jonsson, 2012). The research about volunteer tourism has though evolved and the phenomenon is no longer seen, simply as an alternative form of traveling. Research about volunteer tourism does not belong to a certain field of research and the topic can be examined through a wide range of theoretical perspectives (McGhee, 2014).

In her thesis Jonsson (2012) illustrates how international aid work in Sweden have developed from missionary organizations to commercial volunteer agencies and volunteer tourism. Jonsson (ibid.) argues that the success of commercial volunteer agencies can be derived from the high status of non-governmental and governmental organizations that traditionally have organized and performed international aid work. The professionalization of aid work the last decades have increased its exclusivity and status but the commercial volunteer agencies can nevertheless grant access to the arena of international aid work for anyone who is interested, as long as they can pay the fee (Jonsson, ibid.). As mentioned above, Jonsson (ibid.) means that volunteer tourism makes part of the field of international aid work and social work since it origins can be derived to that organizational field.

McGhee (2014) summarizes in her paper three themes that principally have been debated and explored regarding volunteer tourism. The first one concerns the commodification of volunteer tourism, how volunteer tourism have moved from being an alternative type of tourism to a product, sold on the same market as mass tourism. The second theme concern whether volunteer tourists are motivated by self-development or altruism, and the third theme regard the need of a theoretical foundation that can be applied on volunteer tourism. For the future, McGhee (ibid.) calls for more research about volunteer tourism in the following areas; 1.) Development of technical tools that could be used when recruiting volunteers or to gather reviews of different projects, 2.) A systematic investigation of policy and certification for monitoring and evaluating quality of volunteer tourist arrangements, 3.) Surveys about the role of religion and spirituality in volunteer tourism.

My study links to the second area since I seek to identify what kind of aid volunteers provide to the local community and how this aid is supposed to improve the life conditions of the participants in the project. The can be seen as small contribution to the process of
identifying factors that need to improve to make volunteer tourism beneficial for everyone involved.

**Volunteers – help or obstacles?**

Volunteer tourism is often promoted as a win-win arrangement that benefits all stakeholders involved, which might be an explanation to the big growth of the phenomenon (Wearing, 2001; Vrasti, 2013). To go on a volunteer trip can be a life-changing experience since it can have a big impact on a person’s life through increased consciousness about different life conditions and the “discover” of a different culture. It can also lead to changed perspectives on the “self”, often in a positive way (Wearing, 2001) or the way the volunteer chooses to live his or her life after returning home again (Zahra, 2011).

While most research about volunteer tourism has focused on, alternatively, been based on “the voice of the volunteer” (Wearing, 2001) some have tried to highlight the perspective of the host community. Kennedy & Dornan (2009:183) mean that the tourism industry of which, volunteer tourism forms part of, have the possibility to “become a force for poverty reduction and aid in the development process in developing economies”. They specifically concern tourism - oriented NGO’s as means for poverty reduction. In contrast to governmental organizations, NGO’s have the possibility to operate in a more flexible and innovative way and they can offer a bottom-up perspective on solutions. Kennedy & Dornan (ibid.) interviewed in their study decision- makers from four different NGO’s operating in the area of volunteer tourism. The NGO’s in the study all had in common that they included the local people in their projects. The local people were considered as the ones that should identify the needs and initiate the projects and they were consequently engaged in all the processes of the organization (ibid.). These NGO’s that seemed to operate based on “best practice”, could report slow progress in the communities where they performed their work. The authors mean though that other tools for evaluation are required to be able to determine if the NGO’s are contributing towards poverty reduction or not (ibid.)

Despite its popularity there are many and diverse critical voices about the phenomenon volunteer tourism (Benson, 2011; Palacios, 2010). Big, established NGO’s also send volunteers abroad, the difference is however that those volunteers have to go through a hard recruitment process. The assignments usually require a specific education, the “right” personality, high scores on psychological tests and previous experiences of the same kind of job that they are applying for. Working with socially vulnerable children and teenagers in Sweden nowadays also require a relevant university degree and professional experience. In the organizations that are in focus for this study the volunteer tourists simply pay a fee before they head off to their chosen destination.
Eliasoph (2011) have studied the role of volunteers in small organizations working with socially disadvantaged children and youth in a mid-sized city in the US. In her study she observed troubles with what she called, *plug-in volunteers*, referring to volunteers that were engaged in the projects only for a short time. The coming and going of volunteers resulted in irregular and badly organized help for the children and teenagers participating in the activities. Eliasoph (ibid.) argues that the contribution of “plug-in volunteers” could sometimes not only be insignificant for the children and teenagers, but also harmful in the sense that the irregular help and presence caused stress and frustration among some of the participants. In some cases the adult volunteers thought they could become intimate with the children immediately and that their presence and kindness was enough to be considered as help (ibid.). Eliasoph’s (ibid.) study did not treat commercial volunteers but the concept of “plug-in volunteers” would, in my opinion, be applicable also when talking about volunteer tourists since their presence in the volunteer organizations usually are short.

Another study with an even more critical approach has been carried out by Richter & Norman (2010). The study concerns short-term volunteer tourists working at orphanages for children with AIDS. The volunteers are encouraged to create intimate relationships with the children. The coming and going of volunteers results in repeated separations for the children that many times already suffer from previous abandonment of their parents.

Conran (2011) and Mostafanezhad (2012) highlight other problems that have occurred in the context of volunteer tourism. They illustrate in their articles how feelings of intimacy with the “help-recievers” overshadow how volunteers, working in NGO’s in Northern Thailand, describe their volunteer experience. The dominance of this feeling and thereby a main focus on the individual (the volunteer) efface the structural inequalities on which the meeting between volunteers and the local NGO’s are based (ibid.). The misdirected focus results in that organizers of volunteer tourism focus on finding “volunteer friendly” organizations that can receive foreign volunteers and that can guarantee them genuine meetings with local people (Conran, 2011).

Mostafanezhad (2012) and Manzo (2008) means that volunteer tourism is a form of neoliberalism that puts the responsibility to achieve change in the world on the individual, instead of the state. By consumption of tourism, people from the Global North can provide their share to the Global South. A symbol for that consumption is the child in developing countries who has become a symbol for the benevolence of volunteer tourists (Mostafanezhad, 2012).

The studies presented above raise questions about the quality of the work that the volunteers perform. Some volunteer tourist arrangements have been critiqued for benefiting the volunteers to a greater extent than the potential beneficiaries and the host community (Palacios, 2010). McGhee (2014) mean that the big expansion of volunteer tourism the last
decades has implicated “growing pains” such as exploitation of volunteers and host communities, mismanagement of resources and tendencies of neo-colonialism for instance. Palacios (ibid.) mean that a “making a difference”- discourse dominates in volunteer tourism and that this language creates unrealistic expectations about what volunteer tourism can accomplish in forms of development and aid. If volunteer tourism is seen simply as a mean to achieve intercultural exchange and understanding there are several benefits to take advantage of. Palacios also stresses in his article the importance of matching the capacities of volunteers with the need of the host community.

Research, partly relating to this concerns the work of the volunteer tourists, in other words what they do at the volunteer sites. This is an area that is less explored, except when it comes to projects where the main task for volunteers consist of English teaching. Teaching English is the most common assignment for volunteer tourists (Jakubiak, 2012). Jakubiak (ibid.), who is one of the researchers in this area, states that the practice of English teaching volunteers seldom is questioned since it is seen as an altruistic and useful intervention, even though the goals of the intervention are unknown and the outcomes of it poorly evaluated. The results of Jakubiak’s (ibid.) study show that the notion of English teaching as an altruistic intervention is constructed and legitimated on an idea of English as the “language of the world” and “the cure to all”, an idea that is resting upon a discourse of hyper-globalism and neo-liberal values.

The representation of the “other”

Simpson (2004) points at gap year programmes were volunteering makes one part, as producers of simplified views of “third world countries”. Representations of gap year destinations are built on unilateral assumptions about the inhabitants and their culture. Simpson investigates what gap year travellers learn about “the other”, development work and third world countries by participating in volunteer projects. She mean that the gap year industry that sell volunteer experiences to young people is “dominated by simplistic binaries of us and them” (2004:690) and a notion that development can occur through ”good intentions” from Westerners. Further, that it lacks decent explanations about poverty and global injustice and the reasons behind it (ibid.).

Vodopivec & Jaffe (2011) states that development in the context of volunteer tourism is seen as something that is to be done for “others” and in another place. The volunteer in this context, becomes the active part and the “other” the passive receiver. Wearing & Lyons (2008) argues though that it is important to not get stuck with a dichotomous perspective, seeing volunteer tourism operators as those wielding power over the oppressed local
population since the relationships between those two usually is more complex than that. Simpson (2004) calls for a “pedagogy of social justice” to alleviate these problems and to raise critical reflection. Likewise, Hammersley (2014) shows in her article how volunteer tourism can reproduce neo-colonial notions of “us and them”. Hammersley argues that education and preparation before the volunteer experience and debriefing after coming home could increase the positive impacts of a volunteer experience, for the volunteer tourist. Hammersley emphasizes that the sending organizations have a responsibility as well as an opportunity to improve the preparation/education of volunteer tourists before their trips.
Theoretical framework

Post-colonial theory

“Critical theory perspectives are concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints put upon them by race, class and gender” (Creswell 2013:30). Themes to explore with this theoretical perspective can be ”historical problems of domination, alienation and social struggles” (Creswell 2013:30). Post-colonial theory is considered to be an academic field within critical theory (Payne, 2014). The impact of continued colonialism and racism on social, political and economic systems can be examined through a post-colonial perspective (Sherry, 2008). The perspective can also shed light on “relations of domination between and within nations, races or cultures” (Sherry, 2008:651) and reveal Eurocentric assumptions within language, practice and Western ways of knowing (ibid). A post-colonial theoretical perspective can also be considered as “a position against imperialism, colonialism and Eurocentrism”(Hall & Tucker 2004:3). In research of international aid work are post-colonial theories frequently used (Jonsson, 2012). The relevance of postcolonial theory nowadays has though been questioned. New forms of imperialism that has come with increased globalization all over the world, is considered to be “more up-to-date” and post-colonialism that is derived to the European colonisation is looked upon as an antique approach (Loomba, 2005). Globalization challenge the old world order even though there are disagreements about whether it evens out differences between nations and reduces poverty or if it is just another form of disguised imperialism. Critics mean anyhow that the former colonial system has an impact on how the globalization operates today (ibid.) and because of that it is still somewhat relevant to be aware of colonialism, its history and mechanisms.

Edward Said’s book Orientalism from 1978, which is considered to be a landmark of post-colonial theory and its entrance to the academic discipline, is still a bestseller. The book outlines how Western ideas and literature about “the Orient” reflect an unequal power relationship were the West always is seen as superior. Said (1994) means that the dichotomous separation of “them, over there” and “us, here” affects actions and behaviour of nations as well as individuals. Orientalism illustrates how people from non-Western countries consequently are described as childlike, irrational, depraved and different in relation to westerners (Sherry, 2008). Said (1994) means that the question whether modern imperialism is an on-going process today still is current and that the former colonial systems have an impact on several structures in modern society.
Central theoretical concepts

Post-colonial theory is in many ways a very complex and diffuse theoretical framework that is hard to define and narrow down and it can be applied onto a big variety of research fields. To explain and outline every aspect of it is a difficult and time-consuming task, maybe even impossible and not at all a project within the limits for this thesis. Instead I will focus on the parts of the theory that are relevant for the topic of the study. Below, a short review over the central theoretical concepts that are useful and relevant for this study will follow. At the same time it provides an overview of significant theorists that have been important for the development of postcolonial theory:

- **Otherness** – the process of separating the colonizer from the colonized and pair these identities with opposing characteristics made part of the European colonization. The making of “the other” assisted the creation of a “European” identity. *Otherness* relates to the term *exoticism*, which was a trend in arts, music and literature by the end of the 19th century. Central for this concept is the fascination for the opposite and the “unknown” (Loomba, 2005).

- **Subaltern** - a term first used by the Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, and later developed by Spivak in her work from 1988 (Sherry, 2008). The term refers to the colonized classes who normally have limited access to their own means of expression and therefore are dependent upon the language and methods of the ruling class to express them selves (Spivak, 1988). The term is thus problematic since “the subaltern” not is a homogenous group with uniform interests towards the ruling class.

- **Hegemony** – another term established by Antonio Gramsci that refers to the unchallenged power of the ruling class. Hegemony is used to convince lower classes that the interests of the ruling class are the interests of all. This power is wielded through control of economic, political and educational means and more subtly, through the control of media and culture. Hegemonic domination is achieved by ideas rather than physical violence or force (Cook, 2008). A hegemonic domination of Eurocentric/Western culture makes people in the Global South abandon their own culture and assimilate their way of seeing the world with the Eurocentric/Western one (ibid).

- **Ambivalence** – Homi Bhaba (1994) questioned in his work the binary partition between colonizer and the colonized and argued that the relationship between the two
are more complex than it is normally described. The relationship and the view of “the other” are rather characterized by ambiguity than clarity, since the colonizer look at the colonized and the society of the colonized as inferior but still exotic and the colonized regard the colonizer as corrupt but yet enviable (Bhaba, 1994).

Volunteer projects as post-colonial contexts
It is rare (yet non-existent) to find Brazilian, Peruvian or Thai youth working as volunteers in social projects in Sweden, Great Britain or in the US. Generally I would say that it is difficult to find volunteers that have paid a fee to work voluntarily in any Western country. The phenomenon of volunteer tourism mainly considers people from the global North going to countries in the global South to work. Is it a coincidence that the volunteers travel from North to South? I would say no. To combine travel with aid and development is not a new idea, Christian missionaries traveling to colonies on the other side of the world has a long history (Vrasti, 2013). These trips were not titled as volunteer tourism though since that is a more contemporary term.

Jonsson (2012) mean that volunteer tourism organizations partly have the same perceptions about the “helper” and the “help receiver” that missionaries had during colonial times. The fact that the volunteer work not seldom takes place in former colonies in the southern hemisphere and that the volunteers mainly comes from wealthy, Western countries further motivates the use of post-colonial theory.

Postcolonial theory versus development theory
Just as Jonsson (2012), I have chosen to consider volunteer tourism as a part of the field of international aid/development work. Post-colonial theories have been used frequently in research about development work. One eminent researcher in this area is Escobar. In his book from 1995, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* Escobar outlines several arguments about postcolonial tendencies in the field of development work. Escobar mean that the discourse of development work is dominated by Western norms and values. It can be derived to a new paradigm of modernism that influenced the world during the mid 1900’s and that created an urge to spread development, also to the “underdeveloped” parts of the world.

The “development project” is by Escobar (1995) considered to be a mechanism of control since development work aims to spread a Western hegemony. An example of this is the opening of schools in development countries that further can spread western norms. The development project is fundamentally built on unequal conditions since it needs two parts, of which one have to be underdeveloped. This leads to an intrinsic discrimination of the inferior part. The unequal condition is further cemented by aid and development organizations that
tend to preserve a separation between “help-givers” and “help-receivers” (ibid.).

The work that is performed within volunteer tourist organizations that is in focus for this study can partly be considered as a type of aid or development work as it (most likely) endeavours to contribute to development in the actual community. Development theories could thus be useful when analysing aid work in third world countries. There is a strong linkage between development theories and post-colonial theories even though it is not free from conflicts (Sharp & Briggs, 2006). Supporters of post-colonial theories blame development work for maintaining colonial structures, western-centred discourses and power relations while the ones supporting development theory thinks that post-colonial researchers only delivers complex and abstract theories without suggesting any concrete solutions of suffering and poverty in developing countries (Sylvester, 1999). Sharp & Briggs (2006) calls for a dialogue between the two disciplines since they are closely connected and can be rewarding for each other.

I mean that a post-colonial perspective can be fruitful when looking at concepts, ideas and peoples imaginations of certain phenomena. Even if an analysis of such things does not result in concrete changes in reality it can display aspects that need to be considered while striving for development. Sylvester (1999:719) mean that post-colonialist theory should strive for another output and “become more attuned to issues and voices that stimulate problem solving, even as it continues the work of reinterpreting the meanings of colonial and postcolonial experience”. This is an aspect that I find very adequate for this study.

Conran (2011) mean that post-colonial critique against volunteer tourism needs to be taken seriously by its stakeholders and advocates, in order for volunteer tourism to contribute to a more equal and just global community. To do so, I mean that any tendency of post-colonial legacies or patterns in the area have to be highlighted and analysed in order to erase them. This further motivates the choice of theory for this thesis.

A normative theory

As a researcher it is necessary to chose one perspective when analysing a phenomena, otherwise it will be impossible to say something about anything due to all kind of approaches that can be applied. I have outlined above why I find post-colonial theory suitable as an analytical tool for this particular study. The choice of post-colonial theory does though imply a range of consequences that needs to be highlighted. I intend to outline some of them in the following text.

Post-colonial theory is a normative theory in the sense that it is based on a notion of the world as divided in two, the West/Global North respectively, the East/Global South (Escobar, 1995). One could say that the theoretical framework draws upon a division between us and them. Historically “us” have referred to people in the West/Global North and “them”
to people in the East/Global South. Such a benchmark makes it necessary to make some kind of categorization between people when applying the theory. Due to increased globalization such a vision of the world seems to get less visible every day and can therefore be questioned and problematized (Loomba, 2005).

Simplifications and stereotypes easily occur when we try to categorize people into fixed groups. The categorizations will, nonetheless result in certain interpretations of reality. Bhaba (1994) have questioned the binary partition between “colonizer” and “the colonized” and argues that this relationship is far more complex than it is normally described. Likewise, Wearing & Lyons (2008) highlights, in the context of volunteer tourism, the importance of not getting stuck with a dichotomous perspective, considering volunteer tourist operators as people wielding power over the local population or on the contrary, to not see people in the host community exclusively as passive receivers of help. If alternative perspectives or the complexity within a group or category not is given attention the consequence might be that post-colonial theory that in many ways strives to erase racial and cultural categories (Sherry, 2008) risk strengthening them due to the simplified notion of the world as divided in two. If caution not is taken, the theory can be counterproductive in that sense, just as gap year programs aiming to create intercultural exchange can strengthen simplified perceptions between foreigners and local people (Simpson, 2004).

When using a critical theory, such as post-colonial theory the aim is to analyse and critique a certain phenomena with the objective to highlight certain issues, such as unequal relations between races or the domination of a culture over another (Sherry, 2008). The choice to use post-colonial theory as an analytical tool means implicitly that one has taken position for the “underdogs”. Such standpoint can be interpreted as if the researcher has taken for granted that unequal conditions exist in the actual context and that one group is superior the second. To take certain conditions for granted might in the long run lead to biased research results.

The use of post-colonial theory is also an attempt to try to view the world from the perspective of the colonized and to reveal Euro-centrism and western hegemony (Hall & Tucker, 2004). But is it possible to do that as a white European? Many researchers, familiar with post-colonial theory would probably criticize my choice of theory saying that my congenital privilege as a white European makes it impossible to take such a standpoint since the only ones that can reproduce an authentic picture of the situation of colonized/oppressed people are themselves. Moreover, the hierarchies I try to critique by using post-colonial theory can be reproduced by me, as a European, telling a group of people that they are oppressed (Loomba, 2005).

As mentioned earlier, researchers that use post-colonial theories are sometimes blamed for not providing any solution to the problems in developing countries. Instead they
present complex and abstract theories about post-colonial structures in, for example international aid or development work (Sylvester, 1999). The theory is mainly a tool for analysing things on a theoretical level and can be hard to apply in real life since it is considered to be too complex and a bit antique (Loomba, 2005). Mainly used by academics in Western countries, it is questioned if people that are supposed to get empowered when oppressing structures are revealed through a post-colonial analysis of their situation actually can benefit from it. Doubts do exist concerning the effects of such interventions (ibid).

In this thesis I interview volunteer tourists about their view of the ones that they are suppose to help and what they think that those people need. The children and teenagers that in this case are the receivers of the help are not asked about their view of the volunteer tourists and their work. Unfortunately is this not a new thing among researchers that are using post-colonial theory, which results in that the voices of “colonized” people seldom are heard (Loomba, 2005). I do not contribute to change that negative trend with this thesis but there are reasons for that which I will discuss in more detail under “Ethical considerations” below.

In conclusion, post-colonial studies require flexibility and creativity when applying the theories to enable an interaction between a revision of history and at the same time an analysis of today’s society. Such interplay is crucial for keeping post-colonial research vital and vigorous (Loomba, 2005).
Research design

Case study

This thesis is based on a field study conducted during two months in the spring of 2015 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. A qualitative design seemed suitable since the purpose of the study was to explore what help can consist in the context of volunteer tourism. If the research question strives for an in-depth and extensive description of a social phenomenon within a real-life context the case study can be a suitable research design. The focus is rather on processes than on the final product or goal (Merriam, 1994). When the researcher wants to focus on a certain issue, one or several cases can be selected to illustrate that issue. This design, called instrumental case study differs from the intrinsic case study where the case itself is in focus (Creswell, 2013).

The instrumental case study design is current for this study since I want to explore the concept of help, in the way it is described by volunteer tourists working in social projects in Rio de Janeiro. I have thereby chosen to focus on a specific aspect of the case, a design that Creswell (ibid.) calls an embedded analysis. The first step when planning a case study is to identify the specific case and its boundaries. In the study the cases are the organizations/projects that receives foreign volunteer tourists.

Ethnographical elements

An ethnographic approach in research normally seeks to study the culture of a population and through that gain an understanding of the reality of people in that group or culture (Lalander, 2011). The collected data strives to reflect the conditions in the culture that is being studied (Nylén, 2005). As stated above, a case study approach serves the principal purpose of this study, which is to explore what help can consist of. To gain a deeper understanding about the context in which the help is described and defined by the volunteer tourists other methods, such as observations and time spent at the field have been used as well. By conducting observations at the volunteer projects, information about the real life context of the volunteer tourists was gathered.

I also visited and interviewed people working in Brazilian civil society organizations to be able to map out the landscape in which the projects that receives volunteer tourists operate. The material collected from the field is also essential to be able to apply the theoretical framework for the study since its focus is on bigger structures and patterns which can not only be found in the statements from the respondents. By acquainting myself with the field, a broader understanding for the data collected by interviews was made possible.

Time spent at the field also enabled me to reflect over my own preconceptions and notions about volunteer tourism. The study therefore contains elements that traditionally are
applied in ethnographic studies. An ethnographic approach also allows me to include individual reflections and experiences from the field (Nylén, 2005), which I found useful in this study. This study can, from what has been stated above, be classified as a case study with ethnographical elements.

**Methods**

To achieve a holistic understanding of a case, several sources of information and a combination of methods of data collection are required. A mix of methods enables the researcher to illustrate and explore the case from different perspectives (Creswell, 2013). To collect data for this study a mix of methods were used. A presentation of the methods follows below.

**Interviews**

The main method used in this study was semi-structured interviews with the respondents’ (the volunteer tourists). The interviews are the empirical base for the study. An interview guide with themes rather than questions, regarding aid in the actual context was designed to avoid simplistic or shallow answers (Appendix 1). By embedding the current phenomenon into more than one question the chance to reach the respondents’ independent perception increases (Dahlgren & Johansson, 2015). The themes and questions guided the interviews but left room for the respondent to talk about and expand the dialogue around other things as well.

*Help* is a quite abstract and diffuse concept that can mean different things to different people. I therefore expected it to be a bit difficult to capture the meaning and content of the concept in the interviews with the volunteer tourists. Instead of using the term "help” or “aid” and ask about the respondents perceptions of that term in the actual context, the interviews revolved around the volunteer perceptions about needs in the host community, expectations and thoughts about the volunteers contribution to the project and actions performed within the project.

**Observations**

Participatory observations, both passive and active were conducted at *Project 1* (see description below) to get to know the different parts of the project and the work of the volunteers. Performing the same tasks as the volunteers and interact with the kids in the project helped me to understand the commentaries and the statements made by the respondents during the interviews. By observing the actions performed within the project a deeper knowledge about the “help” and “help- actions” was achieved. Field notes and reflections were taken after each observation.
Interpretation and analysis of interview material

For case studies there are four different forms of interpretation and analysis of the collected data that the researcher can apply (Creswell, 2013). Current for this study is the form that is called categorical aggregation, meaning that, “the researcher seeks a collection of instances from the data, hoping that issue-relevant meanings will emerge” (Creswell, 2013:199). The process included a review of the transcribed interviews and identification of statements and commentaries concerning help and help actions. The statements and commentaries that I found relevant where highlighted and copied into another document. During the process five different categories of help emerged.

Informal interviews and visits

Besides interviews with the volunteer tourists, casual conversations and informal interviews with volunteers, project coordinators and other people involved in the volunteer projects somehow were conducted. The organizations/projects visited were either connected to Project 1 where the majority of the interviews took place or found through contacts obtained during my time in Brazil. Visits at civil society organizations, more or less connected to volunteer tourism and conversations with people working there gave me some input about the view of this phenomena from the view of the host community.

Three interviews with NGO coordinators were held in Portuguese and one in English. Informal interviews and conversations with researchers in the area of civil society were held in Portuguese and English, sometimes parallel. Some of these interviews/conversations were recorded digitally. Regarding the casual conversations field notes were taken afterwards and put in to the logbook that I kept during the time in Brazil.

Data collection

When conducting a field study in another country the process for data collection is often unsure and changes happen along the way. A well-planned study might have to be restructured and adapted to “local conditions”. Due to time limitations it is therefore necessary to have a flexible research design that can adapt to new conditions if the first plan does not work.

Sample of organizations

Before going to Brazil I contacted two Swedish companies that are working with volunteer trips. I was hoping that they could put me in contact with NGO’s in Rio that received volunteers from them. Volontäresaror, which is the oldest and biggest volunteer travel company in Sweden offer volunteer trips to 26 different countries all over the world. The volunteer coordinator in Stockholm gave me contact information to their partner in Brazil to
whom I e-mailed my request. Due to organizational changes at the NGO in Rio they were not able to receive me during the period of the study though.

The second one, Amzungo is a non-profit company that offers volunteer trips to 14 different countries. One of their volunteer sites is a centre for children, which is located in Rio de Janeiro. They were positive to help me but to “get access” to their volunteers they wanted me to sign up as a volunteer myself which would cost me about 800 euros for four weeks. And Due to the cost and since it was unsure that the project would receive any volunteers during my two months in Rio I hesitated to accept this offer since it probably would result in few interviews. While in Brazil my contact at Amzungo e-mailed me again and informed me that there only would be one volunteer at the project by the end of May, which was the time for my return to Sweden. Due to this neither Volontärresor or Amzungo became relevant for the study. This meant that I had to find other organizations after my arrival to Brazil.

When I arrived to Brazil by the end of March 2015 I started to search for organizations and projects in Rio de Janeiro that received foreign volunteers and that worked with children or teenagers in some way. Through the website www.idealist.org I found contact information to several NGO’s that fulfilled the criteria and e-mails were sent to them with information about the study. In total I tried to contact about six Brazilian and foreign NGO’s that either were receiving or sending foreign volunteers. In some cases the answer was the same as in the case with Amzungo - that I had to register as a volunteer and pay the fee to be able to “get access” to the other volunteers.

Two Brazilian NGO’s answered that they did not have any foreign volunteers at the moment and one of them explained that the reason for that was that they had started to charge 50 Brazilian reais per day (about 15 euro) from the volunteers to “visit” the project. In one case, the organization that I had e-mailed answered that they were interested and asked for more information. Information was sent to them but after that they never got back to me. I also e-mailed and tried to call some organizations without manage to establish any contact at all. The selection of volunteer projects became, as illustrated above somewhat random since I was forced to choose the projects that welcomed me. The opportunity to follow certain criteria in the selection process was diminished also due to the limited time that I had in Brazil.

I was though lucky to be welcomed by two organizations that fulfilled my criteria, they did charge a fee from the volunteers and they were both working with children and teenagers in different ways. Contact with Project 1 was established only after ten days in Brazil. Contact with the local volunteer agency (see description below) was established only during my last week in Brazil and therefore only three volunteers from this organization were interviewed and I did not have the same opportunity to participate and get to know the
organization as much as I did at Project 1 (see description below) where the other eleven interviews took place.

The two sites were quite different from each other. The first one, (Project 1) was running their own project and the other one were mediating contacts between volunteer tourists and different projects around Rio de Janeiro. The volunteers in Project 1 was mainly working with educational activities while the three volunteers that I interviewed from the Local volunteer agency were involved in three different areas; one in a community development project, one as a rugby trainer and the third one in a day care centre for children. The fact that the majority of the interviews were conducted with volunteers involved in educational activities did, most likely affect the results of the study in a certain direction. That the respondents talked about “help” within the context of education probably influenced and perhaps limited their perception of “help” and how they talked about it.

In total 14 interviews with volunteer tourists in the ages between 18 – 28 years, were conducted. Four of the volunteers were men and the rest women. Nine of them came from countries in Western Europe, four from North America and one from a Latin-American country. The volunteer tourists that I interviewed were selected by the criteria that they had paid a fee to conduct the work at the NGO, that they, in some way were working with children or/and teenagers and that they were non-Brazilians. The volunteers were recruited with direct contact at two different volunteer sites, where I talked to them when they were available. I explained the aim of the study and if they were interested in participating they were contacted and a time for the interview was scheduled, a so-called convenience sampling.

The interviews with the volunteers at Project 1 were held in an apartment, were some of the volunteers lived or at a nearby café. The volunteers from the local volunteer agency were interviewed in the hostel where they all stayed. Sometimes the interviews were interrupted by someone entering the room or by noise from the surroundings. The volunteers were all interviewed one time and the interviews ranged from thirty minutes to one hour approximately. They were all recorded with a digital recorder. The interviews with the volunteers were all conducted in English except from one that was held in Swedish. All interviews were conducted and transcribed by the researcher, in other words me.

**Literature search**

To find relevant literature and articles concerning the research field I used the databases Academic Search Complete and SocINDEX, available through the library of Ersta Sköndal University College. Google Scholar was also utilized to some extent. Key terms were used in different combinations to cover as much of the available literature as possible. Principally I used the following terms: *Volunteer tourism, voluntourism, impact, aid, development, help,*
host community, actions, post-colonialism, Brazil, Global South. Some literature was also found through the list of references in articles and books.

**Use of theoretical framework**

The use of theories in this study can be considered to have an *abductive* approach. During the process of analysis in studies with an abductive approach there is a continuous alteration between empirical and theoretical reflection. Normally the theoretical framework is taken into account when the empirical data already is collected. The theory serves as inspiration when discovering patterns during the analysis, which can deepen the understanding of the collected data (Fejes & Thornberg, 2015). Insights about what the empirical data means, in light of the theory can lead back to a new understanding of the theory and vice versa (Alvehus, 2013). The results in a study with an abductive approach are always open for revisions and can be used as inspiration for further studies (Fejes & Thornberg, 2015).

During the process of data collection I tried to disconnect the theories to avoid selective and biased material in a sense that the questions to the respondents and to the “field” not did derive from the theories. Instead the theories were applied as an analytical tool when I was reviewing, structuring and analysing the empirical data.

**The researcher as a subject**

A characteristic of qualitative research is the role of the researcher who is considered to be the key instrument of the study (Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 1994). The researcher is the creator, director and the interpreter of the study and it is impossible to totally erase all traces of the human being behind the study. Due to this, qualitative research demand the researcher to reflect upon his or her own position, background and values through the entire research process and report this to the reader. Moreover the researcher needs to give an account of more than one perspective while reporting the conclusions of a study (Creswell, 2013).

I have myself worked as a volunteer in a project for children and teenagers in the slums of Fortaleza, Brazil in 2004 and as a white, European (quite) young, middle class woman I fulfil many of the attributes for a typical volunteer tourist (Conran, 2011; Jonsson, 2012). With my background as a social worker and ex-volunteer the distance between being the observer and being the observed is small. This can imply advantages since the research field not is a totally unknown area for me, which can facilitate the access to it. On the other hand, my prior experiences might connote preconceptions and expectations on what to meet, which might affect the results. Furthermore, I have taken on a critical approach by using post-colonial theory in the study and naturally this will affect the results and how I interpret the material as well.
After several trips to Brazil and a few courses I speak Portuguese quite well. At the field I sometimes noticed that I understood things that some of the volunteer tourists not did due to my knowledge in Portuguese. I did not experience this as problematic but I felt that I had an advantage in understanding situations in a different way than the volunteer tourists. It also gave me an opportunity to communicate with the children and teenagers that were participating in the activities and also with local people that I met through the projects. On a few occasions it made me feel as if I was more involved in the projects compared to some of the volunteers.

Ethical considerations

All the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before the interviews. They got my contact information in case that they had questions or no longer wanted to participate. Letters replaced the names of the respondents during the transcription of the interview material. The names of the projects and organizations/centres where the interviews and observations took place have also been replaced to protect their identity and minimize the risk for identification. In the presentation of the material I have chosen to not mention the respondents nationalities or age to further protect their integrity.

The selection of respondents

To ask the children and teenagers that participate in the projects how they experience the aid they receive of the foreign volunteer tourists would be another way to investigate what the aid consist of and also the results of it. For ethical and practical reasons I did not choose to interview children and teenagers who are the receivers of the help in this context. Some of the children that participate in the activities organized by the volunteer tourist comes from complicated family situations and can therefore be vulnerable. The coming and going of adults that are supposed to be ”safe” can therefore be complicated or even harmful for those children and I did not want to be another jack-in-the-box-adult.

Ethical concerns regarding the selection of theory

An aspect to be aware of when using post-colonial theory is that the theory is becoming more and more institutionalised since it is mostly used by academics at universities in western countries. This implies that hierarchies critiqued by using post-colonial theories can be reproduced since Europeans/North Americans are telling, “colonised” people that they are oppressed and underdogs. Moreover are the voices of “the colonised” seldom heard (Loomba, 2005).

In the context of this study it is also needed to turn the perspective towards the volunteer tourists. Using post-colonial theory as a tool for analysing the material (in other words - the interviews with the volunteer tourists) can be understood as an accusation towards
the respondents for acting in an oppressive, racist or superior way as they are depicted as actors in a post-colonial system. Wearing & Lyons (2008) emphasises the importance of not labelling volunteer tourism operators and practitioners as rulers over an oppressed host community, but to see the relation between the two as more complex. It is therefore important to make clear that the intention of using this particular theory not is to blame someone for being part of a wider structure, since that is something that scarcely, can be controlled by the individual. The focus of the analysis is not on single statements from the respondents but on patterns and structures that can be revealed by using post-colonial theory.
Context

In order to understand volunteer tourism I found it necessary to also map out the context in which the organizations that receive the volunteers are operating. The following text is an attempt to describe the landscape in which the volunteer tourist arrangements in Brazil take place. An in depth description of the context also makes part of the case study approach (Creswell, 2013).

While in Brazil, I got the opportunity to interview Leilah Landim (2015-03-25) doctor in Social Anthropology at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Landim wrote her doctoral thesis about the development of the non-profit sector in Brazil. In the following text I do, at some points refer to some extracts from this interview and to Landim’s working paper from the John Hopkins Comparative Non-Profit Sector Project (1993).

NGO’s in Brazil

Brazil is the fifth largest country in the world with over 200 million inhabitants. With the size of Europe, Brazil is more like a continent with extreme differences and contrasts between its different regions (Landrapport, 2014). Due to huge gaps between people’s incomes these contrasts can be found also when looking at the standard of living within the same city or even the same block.

The Brazilian government have implemented several social reforms the last two decades, such as Bolsa familia (The family scholarship) and Zero Fome (Zero hunger). The reforms have helped thirty million Brazilians to pass the limit of extreme poverty and the goal was to exterminate the extreme poverty before the end of 2014 (Landrapport, 2014). Despite completed reforms Brazil has a long way to go to equalize the gaps between the poor and the rich since the reforms implemented not are relief enough for the lower classes in society. Here do civil society organizations play a significant role.

Civil society in Brazil today, is characterized by its diversity. The areas where civil society organizations are involved range from environmental issues to street children and ethnic minorities (Landim, 1993). During my two months in Brazil I was in contact with NGO’s and social projects of various forms, which strengthened this statement. The NGO’s that received the volunteer tourists that were interviewed for this study were either of Brazilian or foreign origin. Regardless “nationality” of the organization they all make part of the civil society in Brazil.

Many people, including myself use the term NGO when talking about any civil society organization. Landim (1993) attempt to categorize different kind of organizations in Brazilian civil society and according to that categorization, the organizations that are in focus for this study, would not be considered as NGOs. NGO’s are according to Landim (ibid.)
separate from philanthropic organizations since they not claim to exercise any type of charitable action. Landim (ibid.) means that the NGO community in Brazil not want to be associated with any type of assistencialismo. The term assistencialismo, can be translated as a form of charity and can also be understood as paternalism that creates a dependency of donations instead of empowering marginalized groups and giving them social rights (Soares Santos, 2012). Latin America anyhow, receives a high rate (approx. 50 %) of development funds from European countries and a large amount of this aid is channelled through NGO’s. NGO’s therefore play an important role in shaping "the European aid" in Latin America (Grugel, 2000).

NGO’s create a diversity of activities and theories in the field of social work, and can serve as partners to the government in pursuit of development of a society (Payne, 2014). Doubts whether the organizations manage to fulfil their objectives or not exists though. For instance there are questions about if the European NGO’s support the most efficient projects for democratization and the building of civil society or not (Grugel, 2000). NGO’s in Brazil do get critique; due to cases of corruption and that they operate like companies, trying to “sell” their idea to obtain financial support (Landim, 2015-03-25).

**Favelas**

NGO’s working within the social area in Brazil can mainly be found in the comunidades, more known as favelas, which are the shantytowns of the city (I will, from now on use the Portuguese word, favela in the text when referring to these areas). Due to the unbalanced economic distribution in Brazil a great amount of people from the poor North-Eastern regions move to the big cities in search for a better life. A result of this big migration is the growing number of favelas in the urban areas; the expected number of favelas in the metropolitan area of Rio de Janeiro is nowadays about 800. The condition of the favela normally varies with its age and location (Kejerfors, 2007).

Aid work is not only conducted in countries that receive volunteer tourists. To be able to attract volunteer tourists the country has to be exposed to either volunteer tourist agencies or civil society organizations that are interested in receiving volunteer tourists (Jonsson, 2012). Hecht (1998) means that a “market of social problems” emerges to attract visitors from other countries and on that market there is competition over attention between different kinds of social problems. Brazil’s speciality on this market has been the street kids (Hecht, 1998) and later on the favelas, strongly promoted through films such as “Cidade de Deus” (City of God) from 2003 (Freire-Medeiros, 2011; Frisch, 2012).

Civil society organizations operating in the favelas in Brazil can be foreign NGO’s or smaller projects, like community centres driven by the inhabitants. The smaller projects are normally focused on education and capacitation or just activities for children and teenagers in
the neighbourhood, such as arts and sports. These organizations, run by local people, do sometimes receive volunteer tourists through a commercial volunteer agency. The volunteer agency works as a mediator of volunteer placements. Normally the projects only receive a smaller group of volunteers.

The reason why the projects are managed of the inhabitants in the favela is sometimes due to the control of the drug dealers that not will let anyone from the “outside” into the area. Bigger NGO’s, foreign organizations or organizations that are supported by the government may therefore encounter problems when trying to open up new establishments (Landim, 2015-03-25). Projects that receive volunteer tourists run by big international organizations without a close connection to the area do though exist.

If searching for volunteer opportunities in Rio de Janeiro on the Internet, one will soon notice that the absolute majority of the volunteer projects in Rio de Janeiro are situated in a favela or alternatively directed towards inhabitants in a favela. The most popular projects can be found in favelas that are located in Zona Sul, which includes the central parts of Rio de Janeiro, close to beaches and nightlife. When I visited a Brazilian NGO, in an area called Baixada Fluminense, which is located in the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, the manager of the organization reflected over this. The organization had during a short period of time received volunteers from European countries and the manager said that many of them had been disappointed because of the location of the project. It took almost an hour with train to get into the central parts of the city and sometimes the volunteers came home very early in the morning after a night out and did not get much work done in the project due to this. The favelas located in Baixada Fluminense are poorer than the ones in Zona Sul and according to the manager is the need of volunteers actually bigger in Baixada Fluminense, but apparently is that area not attractive enough for foreign volunteers. This is only one example but it seems like most of the volunteers that are going to Rio de Janeiro wants to work in a project that is situated in a favela located not too far away from the touristic parts of the city, something that Freire-Medeiros (2011) also have noticed in her research about favela tourism in Rio de Janeiro.

Frisch (2012) illustrates in his article how the favela, through a commodification process has become a tourist attraction through the promotion of “favela tourism” or “poverty tourism”. Tourists that go on a favela tour desire and expect an authentic and “real” experience of a perceived “other”. Generally are the contact between the tourist and the local people living in the favela very limited during a tour though (ibid.).

Two dichotomous perceptions are dominant when it comes to the Brazilian favela. Either the favela is viewed upon as an area of problems, characterized by poverty, criminality, drug dealers and depravation. When using the term comunidade (community, my translation) a more idealized form of the favela is presented which refers to authentic culture, “real”
Brazilians and a sense of fellowship within the geographical area (ibid.). According to Frisch (2012) is the negative stereotype of the favela dominating among tourists.

**Rocinha**

Rocinha, the favela where most of my interviews for this thesis took place is by many people called ” O maior do mundo” (”The largest in the world”; my translation). The rumour says that Rocinha is the biggest favela in the world. Information about how many people who lives in the area ranges from 150 000 to 300 000 but the exact number cannot be determined since the registration of the inhabitants not works as it should.

Freire-Medeiros (2012) have studied favela tourism in Rocinha specifically and she means that the area have become the “paradigmatic touristic favela” in Rio with around 3500 tourists visiting the area per month (Freire-Medeiros, 2011: 21). Due the fame that Rocinha have reached, it represents “the favela” for many westerners, which is funny since the area no longer is considered as a favela in legal terms but a formal city quarter since the beginning of the 1990’s (Frisch, 2012).

The number of projects receiving foreign volunteers in Rocinha is unknown. The location and the characteristics of the area might explain its popularity as a site for things such as volunteer tourism and other types of “social interventions” (Frisch, 2012). The view of Rocinha as an authentic favela combined with the dominating perception that favelas are places “forgotten by God” and in need of help among tourists, might help to explain the great number of volunteer projects in Rocinha.

**Presentation of organizations/projects**

Below a short description of the organizations where I collected the data for the study will follow. The text is an attempt to present the organizations, what they do and describe the role that foreign volunteer tourists have in the organization.

The organizations described below are the places were I conducted the interviews with volunteers and where I made the observations. The names of the organizations have been replaced with fictive names to protect them and to fulfil the demand of confidentiality (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002).

**Project 1**

*Project 1* is an independent NGO founded in 2009 by a man from the US and his local partner. Today the project is financially and practically depending on the presence of foreign volunteers through their fees and their work. *Project 1* is mainly an educational project that gives English and Spanish classes for children and adults but also after school activities for kids in the neighbourhood. The house were the majority of the classes are given and were
some of the volunteers are hosted during their stay is located in the wealthier part of the favela Rocinha.

At the beginning *Project 1* was involved in many different projects in Rocinha and other favelas. At that time the project mainly worked with coordination of resources for other projects. As an example, if someone needed a volunteer who could build a homepage *Project 1* helped to mediate the contact between the project and the volunteer. This phase was necessary to build confidence with local partners and stakeholders, according to the project manager.

Today the project provides educational activities for children from a day care centre that is located in the same building and to children and adults from the surrounding area. The foreign volunteers plan and give lessons to the children from the day care. They involve English with games and other educational activities during one hour. These activities run the whole day and they receive different age groups of children, which give the staff from the day care some more space, both physically and psychologically since the place is full of kids. In the afternoon and at night the centre opens up for children, teenagers and adults from the area and the volunteers give classes in English, theatre and arts. Some of the volunteers from *Project 1* teach football to a group outside the centre, or English and Spanish for adults in the Municipality House, which is located close by. The foreign volunteers also provide their services to two different community centres, which will be described below.

When interviewing the manager and founder of *Project 1* he tells me that the long-term goal for the project is to open a charter school for 25-30 kids from Rocinha. The school will have a waldorfian orientation and the goal will be to provide the students abilities so that they can improve their chance to pass the admission test for a federal university. The project manager says that this has been his goal from the beginning with the project. The plan is to open the charter school in 2017 and then the project manager wants to employ Brazilian and international teachers. The idea is that the international teachers should stay at least six months. Maybe the international part will be partly voluntarily and the project manager hopes that they will be able to pay at least a small salary to everyone.

When opening the school the volunteer tourists will be phased out and the manager is now trying to rise funding from private organizations so that the project dose not have to rely on money from the volunteer tourists. Some of the volunteer tourists just stay for three weeks, which makes it difficult to plan and keep continuity in the activities and in the classes. The project manager tells me that he realized some time ago that the project was held back by “bad” volunteers and ever since he has started to interview the volunteers that are "applying" for the project before he accepts them. People that seem to have another intention than to actually work are not welcomed.
The volunteers that stay for three months are prioritised since they have a bigger chance to actually contribute with something. The short-time volunteers are thus the ones that right now keeps the project running financially. *Project 1* charge the volunteers for the first month and the idea is that the fee should be equal to what you normally pay to stay in a hostel in Rio for the same time. If the volunteers stay longer they pay a lower fee for the rest of the time they stay. One volunteer that I interviewed told me she paid about 870 € for four weeks in the project. The fee helps to finance the project and covers accommodation for the volunteer.

**Community centre 1**

*Community centre 1* was founded in 1981 in a poor area of the favela Rocinha. It started as a literacy project for adults and later developed to a centre that provide activities for children and adults from the surrounding area. For example they arrange a big summer camp for children. The project is financed by donations and sponsors and is open seven days per week.

*Sergio,* (fictitious name) a Brazilian man in his forties, is the manager of the project at the moment. He works voluntarily at the centre every night and is also responsible for fundraising and administration. Volunteers are giving classes for children and adults in capoeira, Muay Thai, ballet, gymnastics, Portuguese, informatics and they also have an alphabetization class for adults and legal advice from a lawyer once a week. The children that participate in an educational activity get access to toys, games or computers at the centre after they have finished the class.

The volunteers mainly come from the surrounding area, except form the foreign volunteer tourists from *Project 1* (see above) that give English classes to participants (both children and adults) in the project a couple of nights per week. The cooperation with *Project 1* has been going on for a couple of years, back and forth. *Sergio,* tells me that the cooperation sometimes work out well and sometimes not. This due to the fact that some of the foreign volunteers stay for a very short time in Rocinha which makes it difficult to keep up a continuity of the English teaching.

**Community centre 2**

A Brazilian artist founded *Community centre 2* in the 1980’s. It is located in a poor area of Rocinha, The centre offers school tutoring, art classes, drawing and reading and it has its own house. Some of the former students of the founder later on started their own projects within Rocinha. The founder died due to illness in 2013 and since his death the manager of *Project 1* (see above) is supporting the centre by sending foreign volunteer tourists there.

The foreign volunteers give art classes and arrange different types of activities for children in the area every weekday from 15-18 pm. There are also some Brazilian volunteers left from before that still are helping out. The foreign volunteers bring art material when they
come to keep the activities going but beyond that the centre does not receive any financial support at the moment.

**Local volunteer agency**
The local volunteer agency is a small volunteer agency that was founded 2015 by two foreigners. The agency offers volunteer experiences at organizations or projects of different kind all over Rio de Janeiro. The volunteer tourist can choose to work with children, environment, sports, English teaching, carnival preparation or community development. The volunteer pays a fee to the agency, which includes accommodation, breakfast, project placement and orientation from the project coordinators. For four weeks the volunteer pay around 1200 €. The organizations that receive the volunteer will obtain a part of the fee.

The agency guarantees that the volunteer never will be left alone at the volunteer site, local staff will always be present when the volunteer is working. Permanent staff that keep a track on what the volunteer tourist do during the time in the project enables a continuation of the work since they can inform the next volunteer at the location what has been done before.
Results

Review of observations

The following section is a review of summarized field notes from three (out of five) observations that I conducted during the study. The field notes aim to give the reader an idea over the context in which the volunteer tourists work and how they conduct their work. They also include some of my reflections over their work, which will be summarized below. Names of the sites and the people that I met have been modified or replaced to protect their integrity.

Observation at community centre 1, 17th of April

I visit the centre at night with two of the volunteers from Project 1. During the visit I get to meet Sergio who is the manager of the project. He shows me around in the house and tells me about the history of the project. At the top floor in the building, a Brazilian volunteer is giving a class in Muay Thai for a group, consisting of small children, teenagers as well as adults. I talk to a woman that tells me she go to the classes together with her children, she likes the idea of having a common activity for the whole family. If it was not for the classes she would just have stayed home, she tells me.

I do also participate in the English class given by one of the volunteers from Project 1 together with a Brazilian volunteer that is helping out during the class. Four boys between ages of 9-14 years attend tonight’s class, which mainly focuses on repetition of themes from previous classes. The volunteer that gives the class have been at Project 1 for almost four months and is therefore quiet good at Portuguese but the Brazilian volunteer need to help her out a couple of times in the communication with the boys.

The boys are struggling to keep up their concentration and the volunteer from Project 1 raises her voice several times and tell them to be quiet. One boy that does not follow the exhortation is told to leave the classroom. When the volunteer from Project 1 say to the boys that they never will learn English if they do not concentrate and participate in the class, one of the boys says in Portuguese; “Why shall I learn English? I will never be able to travel to the US anyways.” I do not perceive whether the volunteer hear what the boy say or not.

The foreign volunteer have brought gym bags for her students. She tells me that the intention was to hand out the bags for the boys that behaved during class but since almost all of them were loud and messy only one of the boys receive a bag after the class. Afterwards when she tells Sergio about this, he says:“Temos que abraçar todos” (“We have to embrace them all”, my translation) meaning that they should not make any difference between the children due their performance or accomplishments at the lessons because this will create dissension between the kids.
After class, the foreign volunteer tells me that she really enjoy to teach the children at the centre even though it is difficult. She feels more passionate for them since she knows they come from difficult backgrounds. For example, she knows that one of the boys that comes to the classes and that is her “best” student sometimes have help his mother to sell things on the beach.

On the way back from the centre we pass a man on the street holding a gun in his hand. People smoke marijuana in front of small bars and children scream “gringo, gringo” after us. Dark, narrow and winding lanes where you have to watch your step to not step into a hole, lead us back to Project 1.

Observation at community centre 2, 4th of May
I visit Community Centre 2 (Centre 2) with two male volunteers from Project 1 that are responsible for afternoon activities of the day at the centre. One of the volunteers that have been at Project 1 for two months, have been going to Centre 2 during all this time and is the more experienced of the two. He speaks quite good Portuguese and the children seem to like his company. The other volunteer have been at Project 1 for almost three months but have had other responsibilities than the activities at Centre 2, why he seems less “at home” at the centre and with the kids.

The children participating in the activities are between 3-12 years old and the volunteers tell me that some of them are siblings. The ambient is loud, wild and funny. The kids either play with each other or use the art material to create or paint something. They are all waiting for the clock to turn 17 pm since that is the time when they get access to the toys that are locked in. The idea is that the kids should do something creative while they are at the centre and not just play. I do understand why, when the toys are released the intensity of the yelling and laughing increases. So do the fights.

The volunteers have told me that Centre 2 was a project mainly for street children. I question that information when I meet the kids during my visit since the majority of them look neat and healthy. Some of them are though very needy. One boy, that is the first one to arrive and the last one to leave hugs every volunteer at least five times each and accompanies the volunteers when they leave the centre. When saying goodbye he hugs us again, two or three times each. He is lovely but he does not seem to have any boundaries towards other people and since this is the first time that I meet him his behaviour is giving me a lump in the throat more than anything else.

Observation – community centre 2, 15th of May
The second time that I visit Community Centre 2 (Centre 2), about two weeks after my first visit, two new volunteers from Project 1 are responsible for the activities. The ones that were here last time have left Project 1. No one of the new volunteers speaks Portuguese and they
tell me that they were put at Centre 2 since the project is lacking of volunteers this week. One of them has been there a few times before and today is her last day in the project. No special activity is planned for this afternoon since the volunteers were put there at such a short notice.

There is also a Brazilian volunteer from the local area there to assist, she seems to know the children but does not really participate in helping out with the activities. She is more of a guard that tells the kids to sit down or to stop fight with each other. From what I can see there is no interaction or cooperation between the foreign volunteers from Project 1 and the local one concerning planning of the activities or how to accomplish them. Off course the language barrier is one reason for that.

The kids are painting and playing alternately. Since I can speak Portuguese I interact more with the children than the two foreign volunteers. Naturally they end up talking more to each other than to the kids. Some of the kids are painting and some are playing when another volunteer from the Project 1 suddenly comes in together with four French guys that are traveling around in Brazil with a musical project. The mission of the French group is to teach rhythm and music to kids in favelas in Brazil and this week they are in Rocinha.

The volunteer from Project 1 tell me that the group will visit Centre 2 for one hour every afternoon during this week. The two other foreign volunteers from Project 1 do not have a clue about this. The activities are interrupted and the third volunteer is the one who tells the kids to form a ring and sit down on the floor since the French group does not speak any Portuguese. Some of the kids do not want to participate and keep on with their paintings. The French group is teaching the kids “Hakuna Matata” in Portuguese, the volunteer from Project 1 helps them to translate. The kids in the ring participate but some of them leave the ring after a while since they do not seem so found of the activity.

During the singing, one of the foreign volunteers that has been in at Project 1 for four weeks are leaving since it is her last day. She is sad when she says goodbye to her volunteer college and one of the kids starts to cry when she realizes that it is “goodbye forever”. This incident off course takes some focus from the music activity.

When the French group are done with their activity the volunteer that has been translating, asks me and the other volunteer that is left what we have planned now? No one of us has an answer to her questions since I am just there to observe and the other volunteer is brand new. She seems irritated over the fact that we do not have a plan. After a while she is leaving with the French group. The Brazilian volunteer is though still there and by the end of the class she serves the kids a snack. I have no idea where she got the snacks from but it is clear that the kids love this treat. By the end of the class, one of the children asks me how long I will stay in the project? It feels sad to tell her that this probably is my last time since I am leaving soon as well.
Interpretation of impressions from the observations

The ambient of the projects were sometimes very noisy and messy. The kids were definitely contributing to this but I also experienced that the volunteers were part of the, sometimes confused atmosphere. Sometimes no one seemed to know what was going to happen next and due to this the activities sometimes seemed to “just happen”. This normally was the case at occasions where the volunteers, responsible for the activities were quite inexperienced and had taken over the activity from another volunteer, without any chance to prepare themselves.

At some points, when there were several volunteers arranging an activity, I experienced them to have separated agendas with it. This was not the case when one volunteer were taking care of the activity alone. The short-term volunteers were seldom responsible for an activity alone; their role was mainly to assist the more experienced volunteers. The short-term volunteers sometimes seemed confused about what they were going to do and were struggling to communicate with the kids due insufficient knowledge in Portuguese.

The interaction between volunteers and the Brazilian staff was limited, probably due to lack of communication means, from both sides. The Brazilian staff at Community Centre 2, were watching more than participating during the activities. They were taking part of practical parts such as serving snacks, cleaning up after class or help the kids wash their hands. If the children were too loud or did something wrong the staff were though the one able to tell the kids to calm down. From what I saw the kids seemed to respect the Brazilian volunteers.

I experienced the relation and contact between the volunteers and the children at the Community centre 1 and Community Centre 2 as a bit distinguished. This experience might be due to the fact that I observed two different types of activities. At Centre 1 the volunteer had a role of a teacher and struggled to catch the children’s attention. Their interest about what she was teaching was moderate. At Centre 2 the volunteers took on a freer role, in the sense that they could play with the kids during the activity. The activities at Community centre 2 were less structured. How the volunteers planned them seemed to depend very much on the individual volunteer. So did the interaction with the children.

Review of interviews

The following text is a short review of the interview material. The aim is to introduce the reader to the general features of the material. A presentation of identified themes will be presented afterwards.

In some of the interviews I experienced it a bit difficult to get to the point and talk about the “help”, provided by the volunteers. The interviews sometimes tended to drift into
the current experience of the volunteer tourist instead. From those conversations it was
though possible to identify extracts concerning their view of the needs of the children and
teenagers participating in the projects and also actions performed aiming to meet the needs.

Reasons for being at a volunteer project in Brazil were for the majority of them not
explained by “a will to help” in the first place. This was rather explained by facts such as, “a
need of merits for future work or studies”, “a desire to do something else than just be a
tourist”, “an opportunity to get to know people from other countries” or “to get to know
myself”, to mention some of them. Several of the volunteers had no thoughts or expectations
about what they could contribute with to the project or the eventual needs of the children and
teenagers they were going to meet during their time as volunteers. For example did none of
the volunteers mention that they had chosen Brazil as their volunteer destination, due to
specific needs in the country. Neither did hardly anyone say that they had chosen the specific
project where they were working after any particular criteria that had to do with needs or their
own competences.

Generally, the process to choose a destination for the volunteer trip was, by the
majority of the respondents described as random. Most of the volunteers had found their
project by using Google or through sites such as www.idealista.org or www.gapyear.com.
Factors such as price, location, availability and previous references from other volunteers had
been crucial for their choices. For some of the volunteers working at Project 1 did previous
experience of teaching affect their choice of volunteer placement. For the majority of the
interviewed volunteers did their own skills or competences have less impact on their choice of
destination for their volunteer experience.

FG: And I started to look and look and I was not finding, I could never find any interesting
like, since I am not a doctor I could not find any interesting free projects like, what if I just
want to go there and help without being a doctor.

Some of the respondents seemed badly informed about what the actual project that they
worked in, aimed for. This was generally something they discovered during their time in the
project, not before going there. Some of them that stayed only for a short time and that I
interviewed right before they were about to leave, still had little information about the aims
and long-term goals of the specific project.

To some extent was the help that the volunteers provided, shaped after their own
capacities and interests. For example some of them changed from one activity to another
since they thought that they would do a better job or feel more comfortable or useful doing
another activity. One volunteer at Project 1, that were assisting at the English classes decided
after two weeks that she wanted to take care of the activities at one of the community centres
instead. She argued that this was better for her, and for the project:
TT: Yeah, and just the teaching I, I never learned to be a teacher, I did not study it so I do not have any experience. I mean it would be okay, I would do it but I think for myself and also for the project it is better for me to be here so it is good now.

In *Project 1* there seemed to be little planning for the new volunteers arriving to the project. Their role and tasks were decided after some time spent at the project. This seemed to be a process of coincidences and to some extent the wishes of the volunteer. The following extract from one of the interviews illustrates this randomized process:

Interviewer: And the work. Did you, were you well informed like, about what you were going to do when you got here or?
AH: Not really…
Interviewer: No?
AH: Not really ehm. I actually thought, or I talked to (Name of the project manager) actually that I, before coming here I wanted to do like also some kind of football coaching. What else also…and then like just doing some classes, English classes or whatever, Math classes maybe. But just coming here there were like five other guys at the moment doing soccer coaching stuff so yeah, we just thought okay let us do something else, they do not need me there so I just jumped in a other project classes whatever and yeah…

**Four categories of help**

Eleven volunteers from *Project 1* and three volunteers that had their volunteer placements through the *local volunteer agency* were interviewed for the study. During transcription of the interviews, dominating themes concerning help emerged. Based on the different themes four categories were constructed. Generally, the categories include the respondent’s reflections about actual needs in the host community and among the children/teenagers, the actions performed by them to meet those needs and how these actions are suppose to contribute to better life conditions and change in the host community. The categories will be presented below.

**Help as opening doors**

In this category the respondents reflected and described help, provided by them mainly as “opening new doors” and “showing other opportunities” for the kids participating in the projects. By teaching them new things, the volunteers could provide alternative life paths for the children and teenagers.

For the volunteer tourists that taught English in the projects, this was described as the central tool for “opening the doors” for the kids. Knowledge in English was described as a key to other opportunities. The opportunities mentioned were for example, to get at job outside of the favela, to get a job within the tourism industry, to get into a federal university or be able to communicate if travelling to another country.
And they really, I mean, I can see the impact that we are doing in the sense that those people were very happy to learn English and they really want to learn English, they might use that as a skill in the future if they want to travel abroad to get a job, so to emigrate to another country and then to come back here with some, a really good amount money saved. So to improve their life condition for example. Or at the same time just to, if they want to learn English, to get a better job, so again to improve their life condition in here, in Brazil.

The volunteers did not have to have English as their maternal language or have previous experience from teaching to take care of the English classes. In Project 1 the volunteers coming from English-speaking countries did though take care of the teaching to a greater extent than the volunteers from other countries, this did though depend upon which volunteers that were staying at the project at the moment.

Another alternative mentioned by the volunteers as a way to “open doors” was by being role models for the kids in the project. BA, a girl from a European country said that the volunteers coming from a range of different countries can “open up the world” for the kids in the project since they get to know other cultures through the volunteers. BA, also meant that the volunteers could inspire the kids to study at the university or likewise since many of the volunteers had an academic background or was going to study at university in the near future.

BA: (...) It is, I think it also sometimes good that they have to deal with international people because they then have to hear what we are doing out in world, you know like, it broadens their horizon to see all the other opportunities. When there are too many Brazilians coming in from Rocinha a lot of them have like very basic jobs so want them to hear that, for example, I have been to university and most of the other volunteers have too or will go to university soon so I think this is so nice to know, okay, these people can do that, maybe I can do that too.

Help as love and affection

Showing the kids love through attention and physical actions such as giving hugs, are central components in this theme. The respondents described a part of their “contribution” to the kids as simply “being present” or “be there for them” and offering them a “personal connection” with a grown-up or “someone to rely on”. Some of them even saw this part as more important than teaching classes. GW, a male volunteer did not think that the most important thing he provided to the kids was the actual knowledge that he thought in his Math-classes. Instead he mentioned that the relation and the trust between him and the kids, a hug, a smile or a nice word were the things that really made a difference for them. Another volunteer, AC thought that the most urgent need among the kids was love and attention since she was unsure about if they got that at home from their families.

AC: They need love, they want to be cared, they want to be lovely, loved. They want that and I really think that is the one of the first things. I mean, you asked me, the first thing that I taught it was like, love. My God! They need like a hug, they need, they do not like, they finish our work and they all the time; “Tia, tia please look at me what I did!” You know?!! And they
you realize right, they need some attention! And you do not know what is going on in their houses.

For volunteers that did not possess any special skills or knowledge that they could pass on to the children, “being there” became their contribution for the kids. AB, a female volunteer from Europe spent one month at Project 1. She could not think of anything in particular that she could provide to the kids since she had no previous experience of work with children or any knowledge in Portuguese. Since kids normally liked her she thought she could “just play with them” and “give them some of her time”. BA, another woman from Europe, referred to the same theme but also included skills such as patience and creativity except from paying attention to the kids:

BA: So I had a feeling I could bring my patience, I could bring my creativity skills and you always… The most important thing you bring in is like your smile and your attention for them kind of so…

Help as rules and routines
Several of the volunteers experienced the kids that they encountered in the projects as wilder and less disciplined than the kids in their home countries. The result of that was that parts of the lessons were spent on activities aiming to discipline the kids and create a structure in the group.

Some of the interviewed volunteers reflected over the reasons for the lack of discipline among the kids and suggested that it might be due to conditions at home, that their parents did not educate them properly or alternatively that the school not could provide proper education. Another reason mentioned was cultural difference between Brazil and the home countries of the volunteers. The perception of the kids as wild and disobedient existed though side by side with a lot of love for the children. The volunteers described them as energetic, smart and spontaneous. A quote from AM, a long-term volunteer at Project 1 illustrates this:

AM: I did not expect the children to be as wild as they are. They really do not have a lot of discipline, they are adorable, they are incredible sweet and they will just come up and hug you and they get so excited when they see you on the street but in the classroom they are very difficult to, to manage so that was a little bit of a chock for me. So in addition to trying to actually teach them English we teach them different skills, we are trying to teach them discipline. And banners.

The volunteers did sometimes compare the children’s stage of development in relation to what was seen as normal among children in their home countries. Some stated that the kids not did possess certain skills even though they had reached the age for it. This imposed the need of teaching them how to behave, how to regulate their emotions and to teach them skills adequate for their age. During transcription and when analysing the interviews I noticed
though that the view on what was seen as “normal” to children at a certain age differed between the volunteers and even between volunteers from the same country. Education and experience of working with kids should influence the ability to estimate what is normal or not and also increase a persons awareness about that children develops at different speeds.

BA, a volunteer that was responsible for a class for 4-year olds at Project 1 had previous experience of work with children with special needs in her home country. She was surprised over that her group of children in the project not could follow rules or keep up the concentration during class:

BA: They are different in the way that they don’t really like, we at home learn very young, at the age of, for example three when you go to kindergarten, how to behave when there is like a teacher next to you, explaining something to you, like you listen, you practice, you do the things they tell you, you sit, you are not going talk to other people in the classroom while the teacher is speaking. So you will learn that, at a very young age, I would say like between three and five. And here, when I came here, like the five year olds they still jump up, run away, do ehm, just scream, don’t follow the rules so, basically the first step for us now… We are teaching them English for sure, we try but like the more basic thing is to actually teach them discipline. Like to sit, to listen, that we are respected persons.

Another volunteer at Project 1, AB reflected about the different perceptions of the children’s stages of development. AB had no previous experience of work with children but another volunteer had told her that is was surprising that some of the kids in the group of four and five-year olds not could write their names. AB had later on talked to her mother about this who had told here that AB not could write her name at the age of five either.

The expectations about the skills of the children differed obviously between the volunteers. This sometimes resulted in that the volunteers had different requirements on the children and therefore also planned the teaching directed to them in different ways.

Help as protection from the surrounding area

Most of the volunteers that I interviewed at Project 1, that is located in the favela Rocinha, spoke of the area in very positive terms. Some of them even said that they wanted to live there, they felt welcomed and as parts of the community. A couple of them were surprised over that the area was not “as bad as they had imagined” and they felt safe walking on the streets.

Despite the positive feeling they had for the area many of them saw a need for “keeping the children of the streets”. To “keep the children off the street” and keep them busy was by many volunteers seen as a crucial part of the project’s function. They mentioned drugs, violence and idleness as threats to the childrens well-being. They were also unsure whether the parents took care of their children or not. Some volunteers spoke of the project were they worked as a “safe haven” or an “oasis” within the favela.
The fact that the children could participate in after-school activities and had somewhere to go instead of staying out on the street, thanks to the project, could diminish the risk that the children could be exposed to, according to some volunteers. Following quotes serves as an illustration for this observation:

Interviewer: You mentioned like to “get the kids off the street”, why is that important?
AS: Why is that important! Because a lot off the kids that are in trouble around here, I think are quite young, they start off young around here from what I have heard, especially over at (Community Centre 1) and that direction. So they can be drawn into negative things at a young age and I think get them a good education, some education and teaching them that this is better than that, it is really important, really important, they need to learn that.

Several volunteers talked about how bad the brazilian school system was and that it had little success in providing the children with adequate knowledge and skills. The education and the activities in the project therefore served as a supplement for the school. The projects and the volunteers as supplements for a deficient school system can also be interpreted as a form of protection from “the surrounding area”, as a sort of escape. By participating in the lessons and activities organized by the volunteers the children could get access to some “sane” activities and some “decent” education.

*Project 1* was situated in the same house as a ”Brazilian” day care for children. Children from the day care between 2-5 years were participating in the classes and activities of the project. Many of the volunteers in *Project 1* were talking about the day care in negative terms. They found that the day care was badly organized, that the children there was left without stimulating activities and that the monitors not were committed to their work. *Project 1* served as an oasis for the older kids and according to some volunteers it had the same function for the smaller kids, coming from the day care.

The volunteers from the local volunteer agency described their role a bit different since their placements were at projects where foreign volunteers not exclusively, organized the work. The volunteers from the local volunteer agency talked about their contribution at day cares or community centres where they worked, as a complement to something that not was complete or that lacked certain things. FG, a quite skilled volunteer with previous experience from volunteer work in Africa was not satisfied with the teaching methods of the Brazilian personnel at the centre where she worked:
FG: But it is, okay it is good but it is not helping and at the beginning I tried to follow what she was saying because she is a teacher too. But then I realized that it was not good for the kids, big kids because most of the teachers were repeating the same things.

Since the volunteers from the local volunteer agency sometimes were the only volunteers working at the site they had to adapt more to the way the Brazilian staff organized the work. This was especially the case if they did not know Portuguese, since that aggravated the independence of the volunteer.

**Summarizing the results**

It is time to return to the research question and the supplementary questions that were stated in the introduction of the thesis. Which answers can the collected data provide? In the following text I will try to summarize the results of the study. I will start by trying to answer the supplementary questions by summarizing the material from the interviews. After that I aim to summarize my interpretations and try to answer the research question, which was: How is help described and defined in the context of volunteer tourism by the volunteer tourists themselves? The idea was to explore this by investigating how volunteer tourists themselves define and describe what they do to “make a difference” and “to help” while working as volunteers. The supplementary questions asked in the introduction were:

- Which needs do the volunteer tourists identify in the context of the project where they work?
- Which actions, aiming to meet the needs, are carried out by the volunteer tourists?

In the interviews the volunteers mentioned several needs among the children and teenagers that they encountered through the volunteer projects. Reflections, about which actions the volunteer tourists found adequate to meet those needs, could also be found in the material. To sum up and clarify the data in a distinct way, I have summarized the categories that were presented earlier, in the table below (Table 1).
Table 1. Identified needs and actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY:</th>
<th>NEED:</th>
<th>ACTION:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Help as opening doors</td>
<td>Need for alternative life paths, need for additional education.</td>
<td>Show alternative life styles, be a role-model, teach English or other subjects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help as love and affection</td>
<td>Need for love and reliable grown-ups.</td>
<td>“Be there” for the children and give them attention, care and hugs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help as rules and routines</td>
<td>Need for structure and routine in the children’s every-day life.</td>
<td>Be consequent and create a structure, teach the children how to behave.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help as protection from the</td>
<td>Need for a “safe haven”.</td>
<td>Provide activities, keep the children busy and off the street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>surrounding area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field data

As with all summaries, some things need to be left out to enable an analysis. There are some aspects of help and the needs among the help-recipients that the volunteer tourists mentioned that I do not address here. The categories above illustrate though the main features from the interview material. As the results illustrate, there is not one, single answer to the research question for the study. I did not expect such an outcome either since the question is wide and possible answers therefore many. Furthermore, can the collected data only illustrate “what help, provided by volunteer tourists can consist of”, in the selected cases for the study. However, the study is a small contribution to understand what “help” in volunteer tourism can consist of and how it is motivated.

One aspect of help that not was very prominent during the interviews was the volunteer’s economic contribution to the project where they worked. I find it worth to mention this since all of the volunteer tourists contributed to the maintenance of the project were they worked. A part of the fee that they paid was a direct donation. The economical subsidy to the projects was not described as the “main contribution” of the volunteers or as a form of help; rather it was something that came up when I asked about it specifically. Only a few of the respondents mentioned something about the economic contribution that they all made, without me asking about it.

Among the respondents that talked about the issue, the majority of them described the economic contribution as something necessary and unproblematic. They understood that the projects were depending on the fees from foreign volunteers. Only two respondents questioned the fact that they had to pay to be able to work as volunteers. AH, a female
volunteer from Europe on the contrary, interpreted the fact that she had to pay a fee to the project as a guarantee that the project was serious since they had economic resources:

AH: So I wanted to have this project because I mean, they get money there should be resources there and stuff to do. And on the other hand I, I saw it more like a donation and I knew where the money was going and for what it is used. So it was not a problem for me to pay the money. Also because I am allowed to stay there, I did not have to find an accommodation and stuff.

So what do the results tell us? Central features concern either, that the volunteers during their time in the project can compensate for something that is lacking in the local society, that they can “broaden” the horizon for the children and teenagers with their presence or that they can add something extra to their lives, such as love and care.

The main purpose of the study was to explore eventual post-colonial legacies or structures in the practice of volunteer tourism by investigating how help, in the actual context is described and defined by the volunteer tourists. To fulfil this purpose the categories of help, presented above will be further analysed in the following chapter by applying the theoretical framework.
Analysis

How can the results be understood from a post-colonial perspective? The main purpose of the study was to explore eventual post-colonial legacies or structures in the practice of volunteer tourism by exploring how help, in the actual context is described and defined by the volunteer tourists. The focus in the analysis is mainly the relationship between the help-giver (the volunteer tourist) and the help-receiver (the children and teenagers participating in the projects) and how the help is described and defined relation to the help-givers view of the help-receivers. In the following section I will apply the theoretical concepts, as I have described in the theoretical review.

Euro-centrism & hegemony

In the category, “Aid as opening doors” the central action was to show to the children and teenagers in the projects other alternatives and provide them knowledge which will give them better and more opportunities for the future. The main tool for “opening the doors” was through English teaching. Teaching English to the kids in the project was described as an obvious and natural thing to do. Many of the respondents could also argument for the benefits of teaching English and mentioned for example better job opportunities for the children in the future.

The majority of the respondents had limited knowledge in Portuguese; English therefore automatically became the language for communication within the projects. A fact that was less reflected upon, by the volunteer tourists. Sometimes the lack of knowledge in Portuguese among the volunteers was even interpreted as something positive, since they thought it would benefit the children.

FG: And we teach them like words and numbers and a good thing is that the two other volunteers do not speak Portuguese at all so that the kids are forced to try to understand what they are telling them in English.

From what I understood did the volunteers not choose to teach English themselves. The English teaching was required from the project or the centre where they were working. I do lack information about whom or why someone had decided to provide English classes in the different projects. I was not surprised over the fact since this this is the most common assignment for volunteer tourists worldwide (Jakubiak, 2012).

One can though speculate about whether the access of volunteers, to a great extent coming from English-speaking countries, can have affected the supply of English classes in the projects? The projects relevant for this study, did not recruit volunteers after specific abilities or experiences but most of them where more or less fluent in English. The fact that
the availability of English-speaking volunteers was high might have affected the amount of English classes in the projects.

Loomba (2005) argues that the construction of “the other” (usually the native inhabitants in colonised countries, my comment) changed along with the needs of the colonial power. Maybe a farfetched interpretation, but in a volunteer tourist project this would mean that the abilities of the volunteer tourist and in which way they wish to “make a difference” would affect the perception of the help receivers and their needs. If the volunteers have the ability to teach English, a need of English classes will be identified in the host community.

However, knowledge in English or any other language cannot be questioned as a benefit for the person that possess it. That might be a reason why the teaching of English almost never is questioned even though the “goals of the intervention are unknown and the outcomes of it poorly evaluated” (Jakubiak, 2012). One can though question how English is taught in the context of volunteer tourism. Referring to the observations that I did at some English classes, the way of teaching and the experience of the volunteer responsible for the class differed a lot.

The lack of experience and knowledge in pedagogy among the majority of volunteers that taught English in the projects current for this study is not a unique circumstance in the context of volunteer tourism. Jakubiak (2012) states that the requirements on volunteers that are teaching English are minimal. The intervention of teaching English is anyway seen as altruistic, helpful and a “cure to all” no matter how or by whom the teaching is preformed. Jakubiak (ibid.) highlights the that there is a notion about that short-term volunteers can contribute to a fundamental change of economic and social conditions in the Global South solely by teaching English. It is not clear though how this should be accomplished and more specific, what knowledge in English would contribute with in such a change.

I would say that the notion of English as a “cure to all” and the fact that it is taken for granted that knowledge in English will lead to a positive change and better life conditions for the kids that participate in the classes, also reflect a type of Euro-centrism and hegemony since Western norms and values guide and influence the work of the volunteer tourists. Knowledge coming from the West, a knowledge that the volunteers possess is considered as the key for a better life for the kids.

Another aspect found in the theme “Aid as opening doors” was an idea about helping the kids out of the favela. This is not at all an odd wish since living in the favela can be difficult. The wish to help the kids out of the favela also presumes that the kids actually want to leave their communities and moreover, that their current life conditions never can change (Jakubiak, 2012). Preparing them for “migration” in the future means that there is nothing worth to fight for at home, that they should take every chance to move either to another part
of town or to another country. The individual should, first and foremost equip them selves with necessary knowledge to insure a better future.

Simpson (2004) who have studies gap year projects mean that, these kind of projects tend to focus on individual advancement instead of structural relationships between the developed and the developing world. Simpson (ibid.) refers to the pedagogue Paolo Freire who argued that focus on individual advancement might aggravate structural inequalities since the collective transformation can be set aside due to this.

Brown and Hall (2008) discusses in their paper if global tourism can work as a mean to achieve development worldwide. They mean that expectations on volunteer tourism as a way to attain development ”reduces development to individual acts of charity which seek to work round rather than transform the relationship of poor, rural societies to the natural world” (2008:845).

“Being a role model” was by some respondents described as a tool for “opening doors” for the kids. By meeting the volunteer tourists of different nationalities and hear about what they have achieved in terms of education or job, the kids would get inspiration to do something with their life. The encounter between volunteers and children and teenagers in the projects was, in itself concerned as a type of help.

Jakubiak (2012:447) mean that volunteer projects that provide education also function as a “contact zone” where local people can get empowered by meeting people from the Global North, “whose presence alone ostensibly provides motivation, inspiration, and heretofore unimagined life insights”. The idea that volunteers could serve as role models can be interpreted, as a perception about their lifestyles as superior, in relation to the lifestyles in the host community. Moreover it contains an assumption about that the host community lack of decent role models, in this case Brazilian grown-ups.

“Othering”

According to Vodopivec & Jaffe (2011) categories such as, us/them, developed/developing and problem-causers/problem-solvers are clear-cut and play a central role for volunteer identities as well as in the marketing of volunteer tourism. Vodopivec & Jaffe (ibid.) state that the most significant “other” in the context of volunteer tourism is the beneficiary; in the case for this study the beneficiaries consist of the children and teenagers participating in the activities arranged by the volunteer projects. The beneficiaries are often illustrated as a homogenous group that have the same kind of need (ibid.). I could though identify two different notions of the kids participating in the projects.

A view of Brazilian kids as different and “others” can be discerned in the theme “Aid as rules & routines”. They are described as “wild, loud and undisciplined”. Parts of the
lessons must therefore be devoted to teaching the kids discipline and structure. The behaviour of the children was by some volunteers explained as “cultural differences”. Some of the volunteers made comparisons with kids in their home countries and wanted to teach the Brazilian children “normal behaviour”. The constant coming and going of volunteers and the fact that the children sometimes not could understand what the volunteers were saying was not mentioned as possible reasons for the behaviour of the children.

On the contrary, the perception of the kids in the project as “different” could also be a 100 % positive. Compared to the children that the volunteers were used to, the kids that they met in the projects were described solely in positive terms. A respondent called AH, experienced the kids as “totally different”, she taught they were happier, more loving and more open-minded compared to the kids in her home country in Europe. AS, a young male volunteer from Europe also experienced the kids as more intelligent than what he was used to:

AS: And they, they are really smart kids like, I was, I was talking to one of the volunteers recently and compared to the children at home I was amazed, considering how little formal education they have here, how advanced and clever they really are and I think it comes down to their being independent in their everyday life and their problem solving abilities but compared to the kids at home I was blown away, they are really, really advanced and ??? in everything they do, yeah.

A process to differentiate volunteer tourists from the ones they are going to help can be found already in the promotion of the trips. The volunteers are often portrayed as “the helpers”, different from the local people they while meet when arriving to the volunteer project (Vodopivec & Jaffe, 2011). The construction of cultural boundaries and differences between volunteer tourists and the local people is crucial in the promotion of the trips as many volunteer tourists seek a different experience (compared to conventional tourism). The components making it different needs to be highlighted and the presence of “authentic others” are central for such an effect (ibid.). These aspects might contribute to the process of “othering” in volunteer tourism as well. An expectation that the people in the host community will be different might also make the volunteer tourist observe differences instead of similarities during the volunteer stay.

As Simpson (2004), Vodopivec & Jaffe (2011) and Hammersley (2014) highlights in their articles, the construction and reproduction of the “other” in the context of volunteer tourism can reinforce cultural stereotypes and retain post-colonial structures due to a lack of sufficient knowledge about the host community. A potential consequence to this is that the needs in the host community are misinterpreted which can lead to misaligned interventions.
Ambivalence

As illustrated in the category “Aid as rules and routines” the volunteers wanted to teach the children discipline and structure. Many volunteers told me that they struggled to make the kids listen, concentrate, sit down and follow instructions during the classes. At the same time the children’s energy, their spontaneous and passionate way was described as something good.

Some of the respondents, interviewed at Project 1 were also describing the favela (Rocinha) where the project was located in positive terms. Some of them even said that they could live there. They felt safe and as parts of the community. As illustrated in the category “Protection from the surrounding area” some did though find it necessary to protect the kids from staying out on the streets in the same area. By coming to the centre the children would have something to do and at the same time be “protected”.

A dichotomous perception of the favela is common among tourists that participate in “favela tours” as well. The area is either idealized and looked upon as a place where “real” Brazilian culture emerge and where the tourist can meet “authentic” Brazilians. Whilst the other perspective refers to misery, drug dealers, criminality and poverty (Frisch, 2012).

The respondents twofold view of the kids in the project and on the host community (the favela) goes in line with what Bhaba (1994) would call ambivalence. The “other” is fascinating, “exotic” and different in a positive sense, yet there is need for change which must include adaption to Western norms. Alternating between two simplified views creates ambivalence also concerning courses of action when trying to help the “other”. Due to this, questions concerning which parts of the help-receivers life that should be modified and which should be maintained might emerge.

In Project 1 the volunteer tourists could, to a quite big extent affect the activities that the project provided and how these activities were performed. The respondents shifting view of the kids situation and of the area where the activities took place seemed to create differences in how they perceived the needs of the kids and thereby different ideas about what kind of help the kids needed. In volunteer tourism projects where the group of volunteers constantly change, I see a risk that shifting views about the most current issues and which actions that should be taken on in the context of the project could create inconsequent interventions.

The host community as inferior

Reflected in the different categories of help, many of the respondents had an idea about the Brazilian public school system as deficient. There is no reason to question this since public schools in poor areas in Brazil often have lower standard than private schools, where the
parents with better financial resources, pay to put their children. Brazil’s educational system is also ranked low, internationally (Landrapport, 2014).

However, some of the respondents did not know that children in Brazil, no matter if they are rich or poor, go to school only in the morning or in the afternoon. Some of them thought that the lessons that the kids were offered through the volunteer projects were the only education that the kids got. Elementary school for children between the ages of 6-14 is mandatory in Brazil and according to statistics do 98% of all children go to school, the percentage is even higher in the urban areas (Landrapport, 2014).

What I am trying to show here, is that some of the volunteers had little or inefficient information about the school system in Brazil. This resulted in interpretations that the existence of the project was, “absolute necessary” and that it compensated for failures in the Brazilian society. Assuming that the kids had none or deficient education, any intervention trying to compensate for this is legitimate, even if it just mean to teach English an hour a day during a month. Drawing upon this, the contribution of the volunteers, even the smallest one appears to be indispensable. I use a quote from Brown & Hall (2008: 845) to illustrate this:

The use of volunteers, who often have little knowledge or experience of the work they are undertaking (an attraction for the volunteers), also calls into question their effectiveness and raises the spectre of neo-colonialism in the tacit assumption that even ignorant Westerners can improve the lot of people in the South.

In the categories “Help as love and affection” and “Protection from the surrounding are”, can some of the respondent’s identifications of needs and actions within the volunteer projects, be derived to weakly founded assumptions about the prevailing conditions in the host community. For example a perception, that the children were in need of love, attention and a safe relation with a grown-up. This perception indicates that love and attention from parents or other adults (in the host community) not was sufficient. This was probably the case for some of the kids participating in the activities, but the majority of the volunteers never visited the homes of the children or got to know their parents. Since the majority of the volunteers had little knowledge in Portuguese I doubt that the children told them about their family conditions. Kids that actually were in need of love and attention from a grown-up could presumably benefit from the presence of the volunteers. The question is however if that need could be satisfied during the short time that the volunteers stayed in the project and if the relation could compensate for an absent parent? That is though a question that I do not aim answer within this thesis.
Alternative voices and interpretations

Looking at the categories of help and the identified needs and actions as they are illustrated in Table 1, the results neither appear controversial nor surprising. A study about what help can consist of in another social project directed towards children and teenagers, managed by professionals or of volunteers in another context than the one of volunteer tourism, could probably have resulted in similar categories. As a consequence of the choice of theoretical framework, do the analysis above though present a critical view of the different categories and through that a critical view of the help as the respondents describe it. Moreover, the analysis does to some extent illustrate the respondents as non-reflective and unaware of their own roles, as well as of structures and conditions in the host community.

To soften this picture I want to highlight that several of the respondents that I interviewed were reflecting about pros and cons of volunteer tourism. Further, some of them mentioned their limited opportunity to actually make a change due to bigger structures that they had little possibility to affect due the limited time that they spent in the projects. Reflections about structures in Brazilian society causing social injustice in the country, generally came from respondents that had been in Brazil for a longer time or that had previous experience of being in a developing country. As examples they mentioned the lack of good education, corruption and that Brazilian politicians were turning “the blind-eye” towards the favelas and the people that live there. AG, a male volunteer from Europe, reflected about this:

AG: Maybe just like doing something good, like at least something that is helping others. I think it is quite satisfying even though it is something very small. And then I think also if you want to do a big, big change maybe and … I do not know, it is quite hard. Actually, I think maybe that, that you have to try to get involved like in political processes to like, have big changes. Yeah, just the school system and stuff.

The fact that the volunteers not could change these structures during their time in the projects is nothing that they can be blamed for.

Some of the volunteers were also reflecting about the problems that can occur in the context of volunteer tourism. SG, a man from Europe that had previous experience of volunteering in a non-touristic NGO, stated:

SG: I think with volunteering abroad there is a huge risk of getting people that just want travel and have fun. I think it is a very big issues, big issues in volunteering abroad. So it is really up to having a good team, really a good, it is really up to them.”

Another volunteer, GW did talk about the lack of consistency in the classes given at Project 1 due to the constant change of volunteers in the project. He saw this as a hinder to create
stability in the project and for the kids. At the same time he could see positive aspects with a shorter stay in the project:

GW: (…) I believe that this project makes a change because we are only here for a few weeks or months and we have got all the energy in the world to provide them this because after all some of us are only here for three weeks so no matter how bad it is, no matter how much the kids scream we know, it is only three weeks, you know. So we put, in all our effort and we try to motivate and encourage.

Taking the alternative reflections from the volunteer tourists above into account, I also want to discuss theoretical limitations of using post-colonial theory in the following section. Through that I hope to present a more nuanced picture of the analysis.

**Benefits of English teaching**

Under the section “Euro-centrism & Hegemony” I mention that English teaching is seen as an altruistic action and as “cure to all” in the context of volunteer tourism. Further, I link this to Euro-centrism and hegemony. The analysis provides a notion that the volunteer tourists teach English regardless the need of it among the kids and further, that English unquestioned, is the natural language of communication within the projects. In *Project 1* where most of the interviews were conducted, was this especially prominent.

That the English classes was seen as something obvious and not was questioned as a good intervention of the respondents can also be explained by the fact that language courses in Brazil generally are expensive. AC, a volunteer from another Latin American country mentioned this:

AC: Number one, here in Brazil it is really, really expensive to learn another language. If you want to learn another language you have to pay a lot of money for like a language school and… So if, if the community have the chance to participate in free classes it is really, really important to show them, to show them different ambitions!

The teaching of English in public schools is often poor and as stated earlier is knowledge in English or any other language something that often benefits a person on an individual level. In a city like Rio de Janeiro that receive thousands of tourists every year can knowledge in English definitely be a skill that leads to better job opportunities. The provision of free English classes through the volunteer projects current for this study can for some of its participants be the only chance to get access to a new language. Putting on this perspective is it difficult to question the benefits of the intervention English teaching. The notion that increased knowledge in English among some individuals would lead to development and a positive change in the whole society can though still be discussed (Jakubiak, 2012).
**Something is better than nothing**

In the analysis, under the section “The host community as inferior” I highlight that some of the volunteer tourists seemed to believe that they could contribute to something good by just giving the kids in the projects love and care or by being role models for them. My critique of this draws on the simplified view of help and development that is in implicit in this perspective. Many of the respondents expressed that they thought that it was better to do something than nothing even if it just contributed to a small difference for one or two kids.

Just as Sylvester (1999), I also need to ask, what good does a post-colonial analysis do to improve life conditions in poor countries? Is its only contribution to consolidate the perception of “us” and “them” and to criticise those who actually try to do something? Can it sometimes be better to do something than nothing even if it might imply that post-colonial structures are reproduced?

Brazil is a country with a lot of social problems due to unequal economic distribution (Kejerfors, 2007; Landrapport, 2014). The differences between social classes do have impact on the life conditions of children that comes from less fortunate families. Public schools and day care centres for children in the favelas have in general fewer financial resources than the private ones in richer areas. Could the presence of volunteer tourists in some cases, actually make a difference, offering an extra hand at places where they lack staff and other resources?

MK, a volunteer from the *local volunteer agency* were working at a day care centre for small children. During the interview MK told me that the day care lacked staff and that she therefore thought that her contribution made a significant difference for the children:

MK: I guess I just wanted to give any helping hand that I could and I like working with children so I, yeah that is what I wanted to do and doing so…
IH: And how do you experience that your presence in the organization, is like received by the kids or by the, by the local staff?
MK: I think, more for the kids because I, I do not know, they are lot of them. At the school house I think 76 children…
IH: Oh my…
MK: Yeah and although there is like one or two staff for each group of kids, then not all the kids gets the attention, right? So, I think it is like when like, making a difference even for them putting them down to a nap and like I rub one of their backs until they fall asleep. I think that makes a difference.

A sufficient amount of staff is a basic condition when taking care of a big group of children in an adequate way. In that sense it is hard to question MK’s experience of actually making a difference at the place where she was volunteering. Probably, it was also pleasant for those children that could benefit from the presence of an extra grown-up at the centre. Whether the presence of an extra volunteer during a limited time can contribute with for the children in the long-run is though difficult to predict.
Another volunteer, GW thought that the volunteers tourists could provide “something else” to the children in the projects than the school or other instances in the Brazilian society, rather than compensate for something that was lacking. Drawing on radical/progressive theories, Trevithick (2005) mean that an absence of professionals in social work can result in more equal relationship between help-givers and help-receivers, which can decrease the risk for paternalism. Whether this occurs in the context of volunteer tourism organizations that are operating in the area of social work, is though something that has to be investigated outside the frames for this thesis.

**The local people portrayed as passive**

The help-receivers in this study (in other words the children and teenagers) are assigned a quite passive role. This makes the volunteer tourists seem even more dominant than what might be fare. The use of post-colonial theory increases that picture as well (for example in the sections “Othering” and “Ambivalence” in the analysis).

The beneficiaries in volunteer tourism or in other types of development projects are not only passive receivers of help even if they often are portrayed as such. Interaction and influences from the beneficiaries in the projects may, to some extent affect or modify the type of actions that the volunteer tourist performs (Gow, 1996). To highlight this interaction I could have paid more attention to the local operators and the kids in the project, that I met at Project 1 and through the community centres. Their perspectives about how they influenced the volunteer tourist’s actions in the projects could have provided me with a more balanced picture, both of them and of the volunteer tourists and the help given by them.

**Reasons for ambivalence**

In the analysis I discuss that some of the respondents wanted to provide the kids with tools for the future so that they could increase their chances for a good job and be able to move out from the favela. Learning English or more knowledge about the world “outside” the favela were some strategies for this, mentioned by the respondents. That some of the respondents assumed that people in the favela wished to move to another place at the same time as they wished to live in the favela themselves, was interpreted as a type of ambivalence towards the host society, using Bhaba’s (1994) definition of the concept. Furthermore, as if the respondents saw the host community as inferior and that they therefore assume that the local people wished to move to another place.

The respondent’s fascination and positive view of the favela can be understood, drawing upon the fact that a favela is an environment that differs a lot from a city in Western Europe or in the US. Since the respondents mainly came from these parts of the world it is not strange that they found the favela being an exotic and different place. To find an area, that differs from what one is used to, as exotic do not necessarily have to relate to exoticism as it is
defined within post-colonial theory. Even if such a perspective can enforce a vision of the host community as different and the local people as “others” it is difficult to neglect that many features in a Brazilian favela in fact are different, compared to a city in Europe.

The somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the host society among some of the respondents could alternatively, be explained by the fact that a favela can be a very complex place. To live in a favela does not mean the same thing for all its inhabitants since the life conditions within a favela can vary a lot (Frisch, 2012). Rocinha, the most current favela for this study has population of approximately 300 000 people which is about the same as Malmö, the third biggest city in Sweden. Of course do the inhabitants in Rocinha (as well as in Malmö) have different wishes regarding where they want to live. Most likely do some of them wish to move to other parts of Rio de Janeiro, while others probably wish to stay on the same street where they were borne.

For less privileged inhabitants can the life in the favela be very hard. Even if places like Rocinha no longer is controlled by drug dealers it is still a place where you need to be aware of what is going on out on the street since shootings happen every now and then, due to fights between police and criminal groups. Some areas within Rocinha are still very poor and lack efficient sewage systems, electricity and infrastructure (Frisch, 2012). Some people that live in favelas can feel stigmatized and excluded due to their residential area even if the standard of life for some families not differ obviously from people living in other areas of the city (Perlman. 2006).

To make an assumption that people, living in such an environment wish something else for their future does therefore, not necessarily need to imply Euro-centric values. To create possibilities for kids living in such area, to be able to choose where they want to live or what they want to work with in the future can, on the contrary be considered as something truly altruistic.

**Harmless interventions**

It is hard to measure effects of the type of work that the volunteer tourists in this study mainly perform. It is also difficult to predict how the situation would have been for the kids without the presence of the volunteer tourists. In the analysis I draw a picture of the help provided by the volunteer tourists as superficial, elusive, badly organized and too focused on individual advancement. In the analysis it is quite obvious that I do question the effectiveness of the interventions provided by the volunteer tourists.

The respondents that I interviewed where all, more or less working with leisure activities or/and education in projects that received children from the local area. The help might have made a difference for some kids or not but I find it important to make clear that the work of the volunteer tourists not seemed to harm the children in any way. None of the
projects were working with orphans and can therefore not be compared with the example mentioned in the introduction, where the project manager from SOS Children’s Villages warned for volunteer tourism directed towards orphans since these type of projects seem to do more harm than anything else. So if the help provided by the volunteer tourists not do any harm and one or two children actually can achieve some benefits through the help, even if it only involves more attention during a day from a grown-up, should it not be treated with less criticism? Or maybe even be considered as successful? As long as it does not hurt, can it do any harm?

Volunteer tourism tend to reduce development work in developing countries to individual acts of charity (Brown & Hall, 2008) but maybe it is sometimes important to “see the trees” instead of the whole forest and contribute with what we have ability to. As we all know, “one swallow does not a make summer” but it can bring hope about the summer for the one who sees it. Positive effects of volunteer tourism do not have to imply direct change in the host community. They might come later in shape of people that are more aware of their own privilege and the conditions in developing countries and therefore want to work for changing the bigger structures to be able to create better life conditions for the people that once received them as volunteer tourists (Zahra, 2011).
Conclusions

The main purpose of this study was to explore eventual post-colonial legacies or structures in the practice of volunteer tourism by investigating how help, in the actual context was described and defined by the volunteer tourists. When reviewing the collected material, themes emerged that were structured into four different categories of help. The results show that the help from the volunteers mostly was directed towards individual advancement for the kids that the volunteers worked with. Further, that the help from the volunteer tourists, principally was supposed to compensate for deficiencies in the host community, such as lack of qualitative education and presence of reliable grown-ups. Tendencies that the help-actions sometimes were based on assumptions, rather than on facts about the conditions in the host community were also identified. A view of the children participating in the projects as different, either in a negative or positive way seemed to affect how the volunteer identified the needs of them and how they planned and performed the work with the children. Some of the respondents also had an ambivalent attitude towards the host community. The results where further analysed by using terms and perspectives from post-colonial theory such as ambivalence, Euro-centrism, hegemony, subaltern and “othering”.

I have, in this thesis taken on a critical perspective on volunteer tourism arrangements and in a sense questioned the “help” and the way the volunteer tourists describe and define it. This does not have to imply that I think that everyone should stay at home and drop the ambition to try to improve life conditions for people living in developing countries and through that contribute to a better world. I do believe it is a good thing to get new perspectives of the world by visiting places that are apart from what we are used to. But a discussion and deeper reflection about why the volunteer tourists perform certain tasks and how they do it, would probably improve the outcome of the projects where the volunteer tourists work. The alternative path is to stop interventions and attempts to “make a difference” and let go of the idea of volunteer tourism as a development practice. Instead it can solely be seen as a practice of cross-cultural exchange, as Palacios (2010) suggest.

I join Hammersley (2014) and Simpson (2004) in their call for a deeper reflection of the practice in volunteer tourism and the need for preparatory education for the volunteers. The final responsibility for this does not lie upon the individual volunteer tourist but on the sending and receiving organization. Regulations and control over activities and a better match between the volunteer’s capacity and the tasks they are supposed to perform in the volunteer project, as Palacios (2010) suggest, could also be suitable means for this.

In the case when the volunteer work includes contact with children and teenagers I would like to se more restrictions in the practice, such as demand for a minimum stay of three months, mandatory language course during the volunteer stay and clear definitions of the
volunteer’s role and function in the actual project. The sending organisations should take on the responsibility to only send volunteer tourists to projects were there is an awareness about the importance of stability and continuity for the kids that participate in the activities arranged by the project. Further research about the methods and approaches of volunteer projects where the needs of the beneficiaries are prioritized before the needs of the volunteer tourists and where knowledge about children and their needs are paramount for the whole project could be one way to highlight good examples and improve the practice.

Another important part to improve is the cooperation and communication with the host community as Kennedy & Dornan (2009) and Wearing (2002) suggests. They state that a possibility for the local people to identify the needs and provide the direction for the projects is the key to achieve any progress in these types of projects. To enforce eventual benefits of volunteer tourism and achieve development, the mission of volunteer tourists organizations needs to be designed in consultation with the host society (Wearing, 2002). A dialogue between professional social workers, civil society organizations that are founded and powered by local people and volunteer tourist agencies and NGO’s would probably result in work, that is more focused on structures than on individuals. This would probably be the right path to take to avoid reproduction of post-colonial structures and the creation of paternalistic help within volunteer tourism as well.

Through the suggested reforms volunteer tourists organizations, operating in the area of community development and social care, have a better chance to get the role as a valid and sustainable social service provider in the civil society of the host community. As stated earlier, this study is a small contribution to the important task of identifying post-colonial legacies or structures in the practice of volunteer tourism in order for volunteer tourism contribute to a more equal and just global society.
References:


Appendix 1: Interview guide

BACKGROUND:
- Country, age, education, what do you do at home?
- Tasks in the project?
- For how long?

- Why volunteer work abroad?
- Why Brazil?

- Previous experience of volunteer work, home or/and abroad?
- Previous experience of work with kids?

IMAGINATIONS & EXPECTATIONS:
Before coming here…
- What did you imagine to meet here? The area? The kids?
- How did you imagine the work?
- Thoughts/imaginations about your own contribution to the project?

CURRENT EXPERIENCE:
- Can you describe your role in the project? In relation to the kids? In relation to other volunteers?

- Does your current experience match your expectations/imaginations?

- Which needs do you see among the kids that you meet in the project? In the area in general?

- How do you think the project meet these needs?

- How do you meet the needs in your role as a volunteer?
- How would you describe what the project is doing?

- Is there anything that could be done differently (to better match the needs)?

- If previous experience of volunteer work; Is it different to be volunteer here than at home? If yes, why? In relation to the work you are doing? In relation to the kids?

**MEANING:**

- What does it mean for you to participate in this project?

- Why pay to work?

- What will you bring from the project/this experience when you go back home?

- What do you wish for the project in the future?