Erasmus University Rotterdam

Through Participant's Eyes: The "Messy" Realities of Intercultural Exchange Programmes

South Africans on their International Development Volunteer Service in Germany
– an Interdisciplinary Participant-Centred Retrospective on *weltwärts* (and beyond)

Msc Thesis

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May 27, 2024
11994 words

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Abstract

Policy-based international educational and cultural exchanges continue to be a disciplinary diffuse and disconnected field of research (Kim, 2017), which lacks a concise and realistic understanding due to the neglect of perspectives of partners and participants from the Global South (Bergmann, 2020; De Haas et al., 2020; Glick Schiller & Faist, 2010). This is problematic, especially as new programmes in various forms are increasingly being launched without utilising its full potential, and reproducing unconsidered factors and their consequences (Deardorff, 2018; De Lima, 2007; Glick Schiller & Faist, 2010). This paper is therefore dedicated to the experiences of former South-North volunteers, who spent a year in Germany as part of the intercultural development volunteer service (IdVS), *weltwärts*. The focus lies on changes and influencing factors in the programme course and on uncovering previously neglected nuances to enhance our IdVS understanding. For this purpose, the experiences of South African *weltwärts* returnees are considered, collected in individual semi-structured interviews, and evaluated by qualitative content analysis based on Mayring. Building on general, context- and individual-specific ethical considerations and limitations: the research is guided by a theoretical framework centred on literature from migration, public policy, and intercultural studies, following authors such as Kim, De Haas, Deardorff, de Lima, Campbell, and others. The results of transcend disciplinary boundaries and show the need for consideration beyond policy framework, both in terms of timeline and content. The participant's retrospective enables relevant factors to be identified both before, during and after programme completion, decisive for experience and outcome. Moreover, they illustrate the variety and nuances of changes that happen in the "messy" IdVS course. These reveal programme unintended, not always positive consequences and factors as indicated by Deardorff (2018). Therefore, attention must be paid continuously to the realities of participants, especially those from the underrepresented 'Global South', to close instead of deepening gaps and unfold the full potential of such programmes instead of reproducing shortcomings.

Keywords: *Public Policy Realities, Intercultural Exchange, Participant-centred Retrospective, Voices from the 'Global South', Interdisciplinary, Migration, Qualitative Content Analysis, weltwärts*

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I extend my sincere gratitude to the human beings behind the ‘Governance of Migration and Diversity' programme, whose knowledge, dedication, and passion exceeded the expansion of merely my research capabilities. A special *riesengroßes Dankeschön* goes to our Managing Coordinator and my supervisor Maria Schiller.

Secondly, I am so truly grateful for all the wonderful souls who have accompanied this Master’s journey – in but also beyond the courses. You made Rotterdam feel like *thuis* even in turbulent times and I cannot thank you enough for that. My mind is full of incredibly fond memories and my heart full of all the compassion, kindness, and warmth you were never short to extend. Thank you so much for your unwavering support and encouragement. You are an incredible inspiration to me, and I can't wait to accompany you on the brave new paths to come.

Thirdly, a never-ending thank you to my beloved family, who have always been by my side. Words seem incapable of expressing how much every small and big step you took to support me right from the start meant. I cannot promise that this will be the last time I move, but I will never lose sight of you.

Fourthly, to all my wonderful friends who have been by my side for years - You make life better! I have often wished I could pack you in my suitcase to keep you close. Thank you for your continued support from near and far, you make this puzzle called life more colourful and worth its rollercoaster.

Fifthly, to all the incredible individuals I had the fortune to come across in the German-South African context (and all the other spheres of the globe) – whether through weltwärts and beyond. From volunteers, colleagues to friends. Your kindness, courage and openness have shaped me for life. *Enkosi kakhulu* for everything!

Lastly, and indispensably, thank you to my interview partners. The warm-heartedness and hospitality with which I was met, as in South Africa itself years earlier, made it so easy for me to embrace this research as a matter close to my heart. Thank you all for the time, effort, and trust and sharing your experience with me. I hope I have done justice to them. May they go a long way in contributing to enhancing understanding of volunteer realities and transcending toward more inclusive and meaningful participation of underrepresented yet so valuable voices of the African continent and beyond.

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Abbreviations

BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany from the German “Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung”
EU	European Union
FE	Referral to Further Examples in the Appendix
IdVS	International development volunteer service
IO	Implementing / ‘Host’ organization
LV	Referral to Longer Version of a used quote in the Appendix
PoA	Places of assignment / ‘project’
S-N	South North compontent of weltwärts
QlCA	Qualitative content analysis

Editorial Notes

The aim of this thesis is to give a platform to underrepresented voices as a counterpart to dominant 'white knowledge', here participants from the Global South. This shall also reflect in the language, through context-sensitive, stereotype-sensitive, non-discriminatory language.

For this reason, the adjectives Black and White relating to people are as social constructs capitalised. Likewise, in drawing attention to unequal power relations, the term 'Global South' refers to countries that have or are perceived and portrayed as having a disadvantaged social, political and economic position in the global system. Whereas the 'Global North' represents a 'counterpart' of sorts, which holds a privileged advantageous position in the world order. They emphasise the different experiences of colonialism and exploitation, which represent a political and socially constructed rather than geographical dimension. Further criticisms, particularly those raised in postcolonial discourse, cannot be avoided in this work at all times. However, in the main text, terms that are considered problematic and critical alongside metaphoric, ambiguous terms are indicated with single inverted commas, e.g. 'race', 'host country', 'development' etc. Concepts and theories are also highlighted in italics, as are the names of publications.

Furthermore, attempts are made to build a bridge between theory and practice, guided above all by the perspective and words of the volunteers. At the same time, quotations had to be shortened. However, for a large number of them, reference is made to their longer versions in the appendix. Numerous additional examples are also given there, with corresponding references in the main part.

Lastly, with the aim of counteracting entrenched opinions, this work deliberately adopts a more critical stance. Thereby the emphasis extends beyond the individual, firmly towards pragmatic optimism, grounded in the belief that determined efforts can reveal untapped opportunities.

1. Introduction

International educational and cultural programmes have increasingly gained ground, yet their comprehensive and realistic understanding is constrained by disciplinary or nation-state interests alongside dominating unilateral top-down 'Western' perspectives and steering (De Haas et al., 2020; de Lima, 2007; Glick Schiller & Faist, 2010; Kim, 2017; Kothari, 2006).

1.1 Considerations on Background, Problem & Relevance

The origin of formalised encounters can be traced back to the post-World War II reconstruction period, with legacies extending even further back (Deardorff, 2018). As "means to develop peace and mutual understanding" (de Lima, 2007, p.234), they serve national interests and increasingly global agendas "as a public diplomatic tool" (Bettie, 2019, p.3). They are increasingly part of development-oriented policies, embedded in government structures and conditions of a multi-level environment with various non- and governmental actors involved. Nowadays, e.g. international development volunteer services (IdVS) move between "selfish, market-based interests and global, cosmopolitan, ethical values" (Ortiz Loaiza, 2020, p.145). Their increasingly diverse programme portfolio varies by country, orientation and more, ranging from specialist training to IdVS (Deardorff, 2018). However, despite new programmes emerging, lately especially in cooperation with the African continent[1] - often in response to broader migration issues (e.g. the recent EU Talentpartnership[2]), the understanding of existing programmes remains limited (BMZ, 2023; Papageorgiou, 2021).

A widely dispersed interdisciplinary field is concerned with them (Deardorf, 2018). However, only "isolated segments of the phenomenon specific to disciplinary interests" are approached, with the result that "the field of study suffers from diffuseness and disconnectedness despite the richness of information and insights into various facets" (Kim, 2017, p.2). However, all deal from different angles with the complex and dynamic process of a person going abroad for a fixed period, (usually

[1]Programmes also increasingly with the African continent, as its potential, benefits and need for involvement are finally being increasingly recognised (see e.g. BMZ's Africa Strategy)

[2]Here, young people from African partner countries enrich their labour skills through regulated, among them temporary labour migration to the EU, meeting therein the other partner country's needs and overall strengthening international cooperation (BMZ, 2023; European Commission, 2023)

for both personal and professional reasons) to pursue an activity in the 'host country' and then return, following a policy-frame (de Lima, 2007; Deardorff, 2018). Interestingly, they often disregard an integral part of this process, namely migration. Therefore, this work intends an interdisciplinary approach to deepen and extend the understanding of such programmes (Booth et al., 2003).

Another problem in this field is the underrepresentation of voices and experiences from the 'Global South' (Glick Schiller & Faist, 2010; Kothari, 2006; Ortiz Loaiza, 2020). The programmes are mainly tied to government policies, funding, and institutions of the 'Global North', hence Eurocentric assumptions and interests (De Lima, 2007; Escobar, 1995). Furthermore, they are embedded in a web of postcolonial legacies from development cooperation[3] and country-contexts of relational and structural inequalities (Bakewell, 2008; Geiger & Pécoud, 2013; Glick Schiller & Faist, 2010; Ziai, 2016). Therefore, insights beyond rigid guidelines[4], surface and government-actor-focused impact-evaluation, 'receiving country' bias or theoretical externalism remain overlooked or constraint (Bakewell, 2008; Bastia, 2014; de Haas et al., 20202; Gille et al., 2020). Consequently, the programme's core, namely 'actual' experience, and complex realities of participants are understudied (Creswell & Poth, 2018; De Haas et al., 2020). This has practical implications as they translate in programme realisation, unable to comprehensively recognize, tackle and prevent the re-emergence of corresponding challenges and shortcomings.

Therefore, this thesis counterweighs 'Global North' dominance by capturing contributions of South African (former) participants to a greater IdVS understanding.

[3] The 20th century paved the way for today's international exchange programmes. Advances in transportation, technology and communication are on the rise, while world wars ravage Europe and battlefields on other continents (Tetzlaff, 2018; Deardorff, 2018). In the meantime, 'development' is gaining momentum: for the 'developed' countries as a means of legitimising and exercising power to reshape the emerging 'new' world order in the wake of the bloc confrontation. For the 'developing countries' as a promise of participation and community in a time of decolonisation (Escobar, 1995; Tetzlaff, 2018). In reality, Western (mostly racist and capitalist) logics and existing power relations were reinforced and consolidated. These are still reflected today in everyday life and in the nexus of development and migration (Danielzik, 2013; Escobar, 1995; Kothari, 2006; Ziai, 2013). Numerous programs originating from the 'Global North' continue to send participants to the 'Global South' - and portray it as 'underdeveloped' (Danielzik, 2013; Ziai, 2013). This is often done on behalf of or based on the programme agencies involved.

[4] While the efficacy and efficiency of policy-based migration programs of all kinds is questioned in academia, it is often done based on document analysis or theory-based impact evaluations, which often takes place on behalf of the programne offices involved or builds on them (see *BMZ Evaluation Report 066* or Scheinert et al., 2017).

1.2 The case: *weltwärts* South-North[5]

This research is dedicated to the German IdVS *weltwärts* (lit. "worldwards"), more precisely its South-North component (S-N). The implementation is a 'joint effort', with financial and administrative power primarily in Germany (Bergmann, 2020; BMZ, 2024). Five years after *weltwärts* North-South, the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) launched the counterpart with the objectives such as furthering participant's (intercultural) skills and strengthening overall (global) partnerships. (BMZ, 2024; Gille et al., 2020; Kiesel & Bendix, 2016; Kontzi, 2015). Since then, over 4,000 DAC-country nationals have spent a fixed period, working in a German welfare-oriented project, while receiving technical, educational, and administrative support. Meanwhile, only a few studies have featured voices from therein (Bergmann, 2020; weltwärts, 2024). Therefore, this study gathers firsthand experiences of past participants from the 'Global South', South Africa.

2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter addresses the various interdisciplinary influences that form the scope of this research. As Deardorff rightly notes: "no single framework can adequately describe the complex processes […] and holistic understandings […] can lead to a greater potential for encouraging effective cultural and educational exchange programs" (2018, p.23).

Rooted mainly in social sciences focusing on sub-aspects such from interculturality over development to education etc., this framework strives to capture some aspects of the phenomena. Firstly, *cross-cultural adaptation (CCA)* and intercultural communication considerations by Kim are discussed. As a second step, these are supplemented by insights from Carling, de Haas and more, focusing primarily on migrants' capabilities and micro to macro-structural factors. Building on, an excursion into (migration) governance follows, where policy and implementation are highlighted. All, united in the conceptual framework along with expectations.

[5]Taken up in the methods chapter under 3.2 Case selection

2.1. Navigating a Cross-Cultural Journey

In her studies, Kim initially approached *CCA* from a communication perspective, drawing from interdisciplinary fields. Ever since, she has been expanding her *Integrative Theory of cross-cultural adaptation* (1988), concerned with the individual transcending cultural borders, and navigating their new environment.

In the 'host society', the previously encultured internal conditions are confronted with a new cultural system. It undergoes change through the process of *deculturation*, hence the suspension and abandonment of 'the old' (temporarily or long-term). Meanwhile, *acculturation* processes add new elements to better 'fit' 'host society's ways' (Kim, 2017). Both processes interplay, highlighting similarities and differences between the cultural systems. This causes stress experiences[6], leading to opportunities for changed behaviour, beliefs, aspirations etc.[7]. Thereby, adaption-levels vary, since changing internalised core values and beliefs is often challenging and slow (Kim, 2017). In her structural model Kim further draws on *social identity theory* to capture (inter)personal dimensions and *contextual theory* for situational and environmental aspects.

2.1.1. Starting with Influencing Factors in Cross-Cultural Adaption - Kim

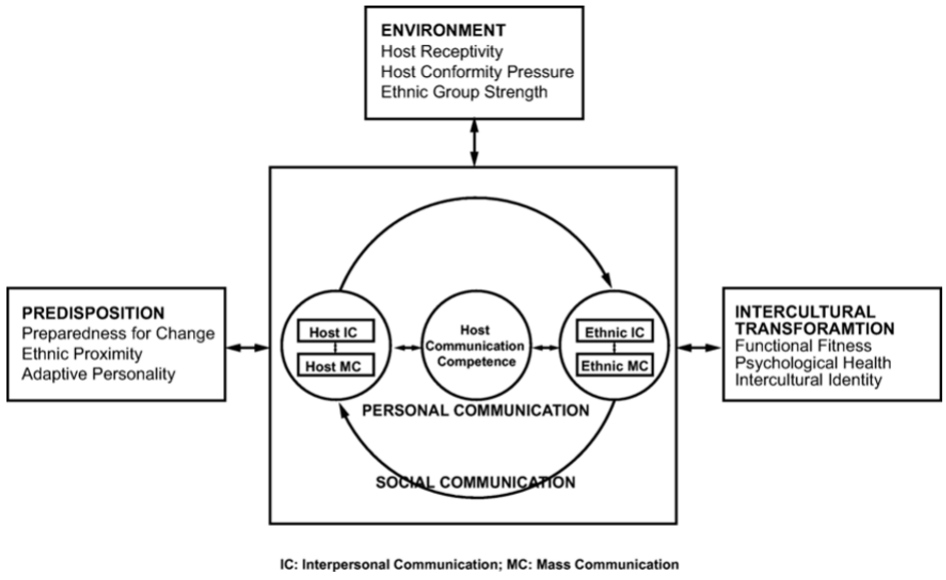
CCA's multidimensional structure and multifaceted forces are captured in the structural model (see Figure 1), drawing from migration to communication studies. With her microlevel interface of individuals across cultures and societies, Kim allows for an individual lens while encouraging the consideration of further levels and the various intersecting facets of IdVS at play. The decisive vehicle underlying this natural and universal phenomenon is communication. Thereby, both the (intra)personal (i.e. mental preparation and processing) and the social communication with both 'host' and 'ethnic group' is relevant (Kim, 2001). Central for participation in the 'host society' are one's 'host communication competence' including cognitive (knowledge of 'host culture', language, informal norms etc.), affective (motivation to interact and adapt) and operational (ability to translate the former two into situation-specific behaviour). Furthermore, mass and more personalised media play a role for the *sojourner* in navigating and operating their new

[6]Stress creates an inner conflict between staying rooted to one's internal conditions and the necessity to conform and adapt to the new environment. This results in 'disequilibrium' often referred to as 'culture shock' (Kim, 2017). These bring and force situations of new learning, which enables possibilities of change.
[7]Leading towards the highest degree of *CCA*: *Assimilation*, where one is acculturated to the 'host cultural system' and deculturated from the previous. However, it is a life-long journey.

environment. Moreover, the ‘ethnic group’ (communication) can serve as a support system and refuge, although it may hinder run it may long-term participation opportunities with ‘host society’ (Kim, 2017).

Figure 1.

The structural model: factors influencing the process of cross-cultural adaption



Note. By Y. Y. Kim, 2001 © Springer Nature

However, communication is reciprocally attached to the new sociocultural conditions of the environment (Kim, 2017). It consists of three main factors: ‘host receptivity’, ‘host conformity pressure’ and ‘ethnic group strength’. The former includes acceptance, welcomeness, openness, and support for foreign *strangers*, dependent on perceived cultural differences, prejudices, incompatibility, and inter-country hostility. ‘Host conformity pressure’, on the other hand, captures the "extent to which the society challenges strangers to adopt the normative patterns of the host culture" (Kim, 2017, p.8) and their general acceptance of others. Lastly, the strength of an ‘ethnic group’ in the ‘host society’ depends on its group size, status, and power. While it can facilitate *adaptation*, it can also discourage it through pressure to comply with one's ‘ethnic community’.

Another aspect is individual’s ‘conditions’ (Kim, 2017). The predispositions, decisive for the way of life in the ‘host society’ and its changes, are divided into three categories: Preparedness, ‘ethnic proximity/distance’, and personality predisposition. Preparedness aiming at ‘host communication competence’, enables communication and participation in the ‘host society’ and ranges from cultural and linguistic knowledge to emotional resilience and ambition. Secondly, the perceived proximity/distance between group characteristics crucially influences (ease of) participation and competence development in

the ‘host environment’. Lastly, personal resources for adapting to the new environment and challenges, including openness, strength (such as resilience, risk-taking, patience, resourcefulness, elasticity, and positivity) matter.

Ultimately, there are various facets of adaptive change that unfold in a *stranger* along a continuum, including the following: Firstly, "increased functional fitness in carrying out daily transactions" (Kim, 2017, p.10) encompasses meeting one's own needs in terms of contentment, confidence, and self-esteem. Secondly, initially characterised by frustration, anxiety, and an overall unsettling mental and emotional state changes. "Through continuous acculturation and deculturation experiences, however, most *strangers* can achieve a higher level of psychological health and a subsiding level of disturbances in dealing with the host environment, as well as an increased internal integration - a sense of inner cohesiveness and confidence" (Kim, 2017, p.11). Thirdly, sustained change contributes to the development of an *intercultural identity*, including individuation (recognition and valuing of personal uniqueness and distinctiveness) and simultaneously universalisation (perspective-expansion beyond culture). In conclusion, all determinants point to *stranger*’s change during the intercultural experience abroad.

2.2. Incorporating Migration Insights

Taking a migration perspective brings forth further relevant aspects for a better understanding of IdVS experiences. In doing so, we encompass pre-departure considerations, highlighting macro-level structures at play from Carling to De Haas, further enhanced by Kuschminder upon return.

2.2.1. Insights on Pre-Departure Influences – Carling

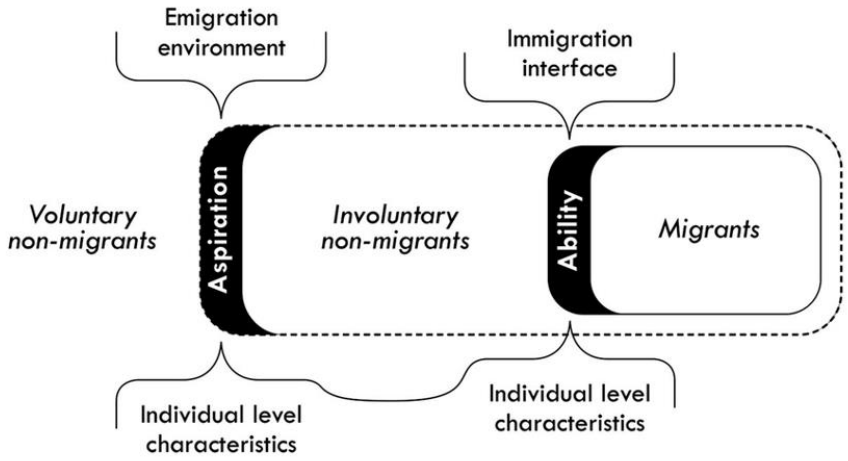
Carling (2002) takes a closer look at the *aspirations* and *abilities* of a (prospective) migrant with a strong focus on the period before departure. In the *aspiration/ability model*[8] (Figure 2), he captures determinants of migration including individual level characteristics, the specific macro-level emigration environment, and the immigration interface. Therefore, individual characteristics consider gender, age, family migration history, social status, and educational attainment important. However, their relevance is defined in relation to the respective society, illustrates the interplay and separate relevance of macrostructures (Carling & Schewel 2017). Those are determined by the emigration environment, which incorporates historical, economic, cultural, political, and social

[8]Explanation of the reasons for migration or involuntary non-migration based on the factors: aspiration and ability

contexts. Therein, poverty, violence, political freedom etc. can impact an individual. Another element is the immigration interface, i.e. intersection between emigration and 'host country' and "structural frame of opportunities and barriers within which potential migrants can move" (Carling, 2002, p.22). The context- and person-specific interface, consisting of immigration policies, regulations [9] etc., determines migrants' (migration) *abilities* alongside individual level characteristics.

Figure 2.

The aspiration/ability model



Note. By J. Carling, 2002.

2.2.2. Advancing into the Migration-Development Nexus: Navigating the Migration Journey - De Haas, Kuschminder & more

So far, the intercultural and migration lenses have been addressed separately; now, they will be interwoven into the migration-development nexus.

Carling's used *abilities* are closely linked to a concept in development literature known as *capabilities.* Sen defines them as individual's possibilities and freedoms to live a valuable and meaningful life. While he takes an individual-centred approach to development, he simultaneously

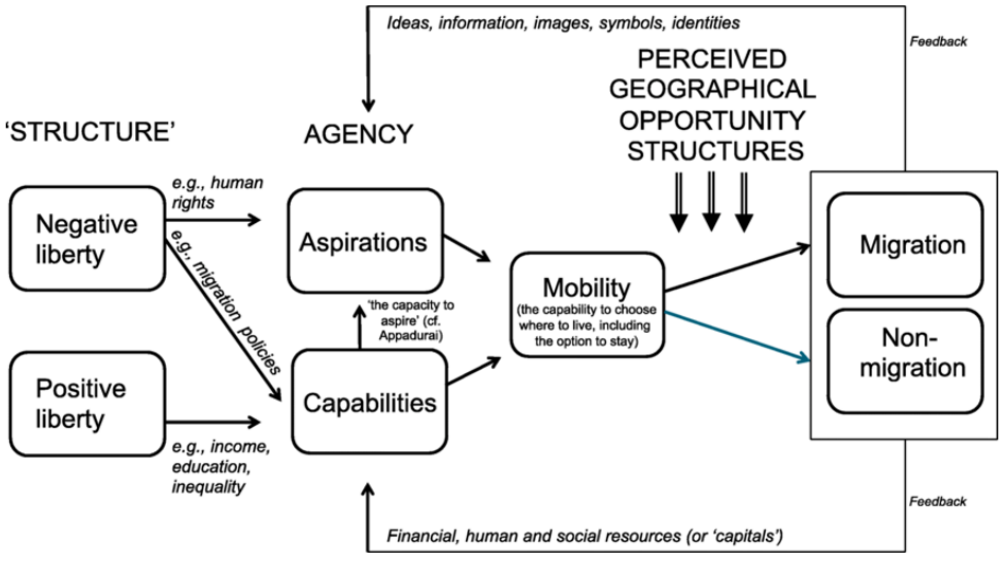
[9]Carling (2002) approaches this from a lens of international migration - detached from policy-based programmes such as IdVS.

holds state and society, especially social and political institutions, accountable for creating an environment supportive of capability development (Sen, 1999).

Based on this, De Haas extends Carling's model to conceptualise migratory agency (Figure 3) into the migration-development nexus. He notes, while closely interwoven, *aspirations* and *capabilities* are different concepts. Here, *capabilities* extend beyond economic resources (material) to include social (environment and network), cultural (knowledge, skills) and bodily (good health, physical condition, and habitus), all crucial for the migration decision and experience (De Haas, 2010; 2014). He recognises the strong influence of macro-structural conditions and their various dimensions, ranging from socio-economic context (economic and political factors - labour market conditions, social inequality etc.), institutional context (legal, administrative, and regulatory frameworks - policies), social context (networks, norms, values - community relationship, cultural beliefs) to spatial context (physical and environmental factors - climate, resources, urbanisation) (De Haas, 2010). Thus, policies, social facilities, and other contextual factors are relevant from the (inter)national to the local (livelihood) level. Expanding Berlin's concept of *liberties* (1969), these factors serve either as positive (allowing self-determined 'purposeful' living) or negative (removing obstacles, barriers, or constraints) (De Haas, 2021).

Figure 3.

Expanded aspirations-capabilities framework for conceptualising migratory agency



Note. By H., De Haas, 2021. © Springer Nature

However, literature on the return and reintegration of migrants underlines their importance also upon return. Exemplary, Kuschminder emphasises the importance of the structural and cultural environment, especially access to rights, institutions, labour market, support from various actors and social networks, but also self-identification back in the 'host society' (2017).

In reference to Kim, migration scholars therefore broaden the scope by focussing more strongly on the emigration country before up until the end of intercultural experiences. Thereby, they expand a person's individual predispositions to consider socio-demographic characteristics and additional resources. Furthermore, it offers a more nuanced and broader perspective on context-specific factors, particularly focusing on institutional aspects and the interface between emigration and immigration countries.

2.3. Detour into the Programme Component - Béland, Dimitriadis & more

The policy underlying IdVS programmes is part of a wider immigration interface, which frames preparation, through international experience, to return. Thus, this section dives with postcolonial awareness into public policy to diplomacy literature.

Particularly, public diplomacy scholars highlight policy-based programmes' instrumentalization through specific activities to pursue pre-determined objectives based on nation-state or common goals (Bettie, 2019; de Lima, 2007). These programmes almost exclusively stem from the 'Global North', are characterised by the western idea of 'development' and linked to corresponding institutions. For this reason, they are part of a historical, especially colonial, legacies of North-South relations that affect both programmes and participants today (Escobar, 1995; Geiger & Pécoud, 2013; Kothari, 2006). Those often lead amongst others to undesired and unintended effects (Deardorff, 2018).

Furthermore, public policy authors note the impact of policy orientation and design on the experiences of those affected (Béland, et al., 2022). Thereby, they build on *policy feedback*, including *lock-in effects*, and their influence on political environment and policy-making processes by Pierson (1993; 1994) and Schneider and Ingram's *social construction of target population theory* on identity construction (1993). They capture the following elements (Béland, et al., 2022; Campbell, 2012): Effects of material nature on available money, access to resources and opportunities. Symbolically, affecting identity, own and societal perception, and social interaction

of participants. Cognitively, shaping aspirations and capabilities. Therefore, policies can (de)mobilise for (political) engagement or in conclusion, potentially influencing every aspect of a person's everyday life at large.

Beyond (in)direct *policy effects*, its implementation involves different levels and various actors to support execution and participants (Bettie, 2019; de Lima, 2007). While both state and non-state actors are engaged, literature on immigration governance particularly points to the increasing importance of local-level actors and non-governmental organisations in addressing policy's Implementation Gaps (Dimitriadis et al., 2021). Overall, the hierarchies and interactions therein can be illuminated by *multi-level governance (MLG) theory* based on Hooghe and Marks (1992), considered particularly useful for the complex migration context (Caponio & Jones Correra, 2017). Expanding MLG with the *'battleground' concept*, further improves our understanding of horizontal dimensions and realistic joint implementation, placed along a continuum from conflict to cooperation (Dimitriadis et al., 2021. Overall, it allows for a more nuanced understanding of policy-based migration programmes within network-context, uncovering actors' interests and relationships as possible factors in the implementation process.

In summary, this section expands our framework, specifically on the immigration interface, by covering aspects from policy to implementation more thoroughly. This closes the reflections that begun with a strongly individual-centred *CCA* lens, expanded by migration scholar's macro-structural considerations including the emigration context. Below, all are merged in one conceptual framework.

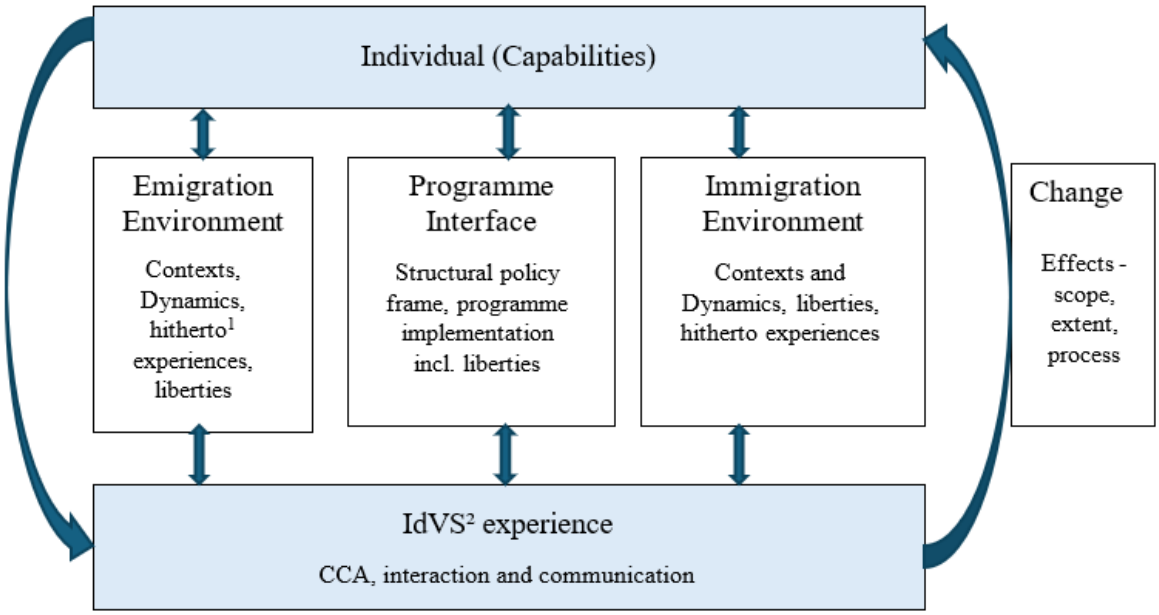
2.4. Conceptual Framework & Expectations

This section draws on the concepts and theories discussed above, combining this research's main components[10].

[10]It is not intended to be exhaustive, but merely to help the reader familiarise themselves with the previously discussed content and its application in this research.

Figure 4.

Conceptual Visualisation of a Participant Experience in an International Development Volunteer Service (IdVS)



Note. The IdVS experience has a process character shaped by different environments and factors. While their extent varies, this differentiation is not made here.

[1]Not restricted to this environment, could encompass previous travel, differing country of birth etc.

[2]IdVS: International development volunteer service; interchangeable with other similar programme forms

Figure 4 illustrates the interplay of our main components in the IdVS, starting with the individual (capabilities)[11]. Those are prior to the IdVS shaped by the emigration environment[12], upon participation additionally by the programme interface[13], hence the laid-out structure by policy and programme structure, and the immigration environment[14]. The IdVS experience[15] itself is shaped by them each to differing extents. The individual with its own predispositions interacts with this

[11]Building on Kim's *predispositions* (1988), Carling's *individual characteristics* (incl. Sociodemographic factors) 2002) and De Haas' *capabilities* (incl. Aspiration) (2010; 2014)

[12]Building on Carling's *emigration environment* (2002) and De Haas (2010) *structure* (including macro-structural conditions, liberties and contexts) and Kuschminder's insights on *return* (2017)

[13] Building on Carling's *immigration interface* (2002) but focused more on policy and programme interface, incorporating *policy feedback theory* (Béland, et al., 2022; Campbell, 2012), Deardorff's insights on changes (2018), implementation in *MLG* (Hooghe & Marks, 1992) and *battleground* (Dimitriadis, et al., 2021)

[14]Building on Carling's *emigration environment* (2002) and De Haas (2010) *structure* (including macro-structural conditions, liberties and contexts), supplemented by Kim's (1988, 2017) *environmental factors*

[15]Building on *communication* and *intercultural transformation* part of Kim's structural model (1988; 2001; 2017)

environment and partakes in an adaptation process. Change[16] occurs, affecting the individual. This process is repeated continuously with constant capability-adjustment. Upon IdVS end, the emigration environment becomes prominent, negotiating the adjustments from the programme period in the immigration environment. However, the other factors might still be at play[17].

2.4.1. Expectations

Based on this framework, the following expectations derived:

a. Based on intercultural studies (Deardorff, 2018; Kim, 2001), changes in the participant due to the IdVS participation is expected.
    i. A broader and more nuanced spectrum of revealed change is expected, extending findings focused on interculturality and programme-objectives due to the participants' lens, integration of interdisciplinary fields and Deardorff's input (2018).
b. Drawing from migration literature, a stronger role of environmental factors is expected, shaping the individual prior to the IdVS, in the 'host country' and upon return to the emigration environment.
    i. Macro-structural conditions are expected to be important following Carling (2002), De Haas (2010) and Kuschminder (2017).
c. Crucial factors in the immigration environment stem further from interaction, especially communication in the 'host society' following Kim (2001).
d. Building on Public Policy insights (Béland, et al., 2022; Campbell, 2012; De Lima, 2007; Hooghe & Marks, 1992), policy and programme are expected to play a crucial role in the IdVS experience by setting a structural frame through design and implementation.
e. The individual with their own characteristics, experiences and capabilities is expected to be a determining factor themself, following Carling (2002), De Haas (2010) and Kim (2001).

In summary, extending and nuancing the existing IdVS understanding is expected through further interdisciplinary integration and participant lens.

[16]Building on Kim's *intercultural transformation* and insights from Deardorff (see *Process* Model, 2018)
[17]However, they are much more restrained than when participating in the programme in the immigration country itself.

3. Research Design & Methodology

The following section discusses the qualitative research design, starting with research question, followed by case selection, methodology including details and limitations on data collection and analysis, ethical considerations and lastly operationalisation.

3.1. Research Question

This research thematises IdVS as a form of policy-based temporary migration and their impact on participants, guided by this research question:

How do insights of former South-African weltwärts participants enhance our understanding of international development volunteer services (IdVS)?

Insights from former *weltwärts* participants are analysed following further these sub-questions:

1. *What changes resulting from the programme participation do former participants identify?*
2. *What factors explaining differing perceptions on change and overall weltwärts experience prove to be crucial under this lens?*

Thus, the research combines descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory elements by following interdisciplinary participant-insights.

3.2. Case Selection

This study examines the impact of IdVS participation looking at *weltwärts*[18], an IdVS connecting young people[19] from and in Germany across regions[20].

[18]The following information on *weltwärts* are based on the" *Förderleitlinien weltwärts 2024*" document (BMZ, 2024), otherwise further sources are marked.

[19]Volunteers are generally between 18 and 28 years old at the time of departure. In justified individual cases, participation after the age of 29 is also possible. People with a disability or impairment can participate up to the age of 35.

[20]From all countries on the DAC list, from Asia, Africa, Latin America, Oceania, and Eastern Europe

Based on the "*Bundestagsbeschluss zum Weltwärts-Programm*"[21] from 2007[22], German volunteers embarked on 'development' work[23] (BMZ, 2011). Building on postcolonial assumptions and design, it re-embodies the prevalence of Eurocentrism and dependencies in the migration-development nexus (Geiger & Pécoud, 2013; Kontzi, 2015; Ziai, 2016). Moreover, with its implementation in a "*Gemeinschaftswerk*"[24] by state and civil society organisations with main financing, political control, and responsibility in the 'Global North', it is exemplary for a multitude of policy-based (temporary) migration programmes.

In 2013, acting upon this criticism (among other modifications) the South-North counterpart starts, enabling volunteers from partnering countries an IdVS with Germany as the 'host country'. Therein, participants engage with society and in local places of assignment (PoA or 'projects')[25], all facilitated through an organising and pedagogical programme-frame. As one of the largest IdVS worldwide and its goal[26] of contributing to the acquisition of participants' knowledge and skills[27] through non-formal education[28] and international encounter, *weltwärts* is an interesting case to study (Scheinert et al., 2019). Related to this, with its temporary long-term engagement over several months[29] and the aim of contributing to development policy issues such as socio-ecological

[21]*Bundestagsbeschluss zum Weltwärts-Programm*: German for "Government Resolution on *Weltwärts*"
[22]Including the published basic framework in the "Guidelines for the development volunteer service *weltwärts*" from 1st of August 2007, along with the BMZ strategy paper on returnee work and a list of objectives crafted for the programme (BMZ, 2011). Besides adaptations, its core remains the same (BMZ, 2024).
[23]Classically, the aim was to bring development to the country of assignment (BMZ, 2011), which was heavily criticised over time and led to reconsideration and adaptations. This included the extension of the programme to include the South-North component. Moreover, the aim was to contribute to development information and education in Germany, while increasing people's general awareness of North-South relations, their acceptance of and need for development policies and willingness to participate in global learning (BMZ, 2011).
[24]These include the BMZ, BAFzA, the *weltwärts* coordination office at Engagement Global, quality organisations, IO, partner organisations, PoA, mentors, 'host families' and other civil society organisations, alumni, etc.
[25]Only if geared towards the common good and in engagement with development policy issues such as the SDGS, e.g. PoA include on different areas e.g. for education, health, climate and environmental protection, culture, sport or human rights
[26]For exact objectives, see the "*Förderleitlinien weltwärts 2024*" (the German version is mostly up to date compared to the English version)
[27]Predominantly on a global scale, common good-oriented and development-political
[28]According to the *Weltwärts* website (2024b) it follows the concept *Globales Lernen* [English for: "Global learning"], which "[...] is understood as learning for globally sustainable development. Through *weltwärts*, participants build and develop skills that enable them to contribute to sustainable development worldwide - even beyond the programme itself. The Council of Europe defines global learning as 'development education, human rights education, sustainability education, education for peace and conflict prevention and intercultural education, i.e. the global dimensions of civic education" (Weltwärts, 2024b).
[29]Average 12, minimum 6 up to 18 months (exception 24) and the subsequent return of the volunteer

transformation[30] and improving[31] sustainable partnerships (BMZ, 2024), it provides a blueprint for many currently emerging programme initiatives (e.g. *EU Talentpartnership*).

Missing is the authentic and free perspective of participants therein, which this research embraces (Bergmann, 2020; De Haas, et al., 2020). The existing and growing attention to migration and partnerships with the African continent, its simultaneous lack of representation researchers' contextual understanding and proximity [32], further narrowed the sample (Kothari, 2006; Papageorgiou, 2021; Charmaz, 2014). South Africa as one emigration country was chosen to facilitate comparability and likewise one 'sending organisation' (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Furthermore, because of its key partner role for Europe and researcher's familiarity in the German-South African nexus[33](European Commission, 2017). Potential biases resulting from the researcher's closeness shall be considered and counteracted (Campbell et al., 2020).

Lastly, purposive sampling facilitated a diverse range of participants and experiences, through contrasting socio-demographic characteristics[34], participation periods, PoA, and regions. Guided by the coordinator[35]'s expertise, former participants were contacted[36], and interviews arranged[37]. The following chapter addresses further research implementation.

[30]Following Agenda 2030

[31]Including building new and strengthening existing ones with stakeholders and beyond - also by influencing the volunteer's surrounding

[32]As a student, *weltwärts* participant and work in various organisation and initiatives with focus on the African continent

[33]As a *weltwärts* participant, years of volunteering experience in various South African-German organisations and initiatives, including in recent years as a *weltwärts* North-South and South-North coordinator

[34]Predominantly gender, age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status

[35]A South-African employee, who facilitated IdVS for multiple years in the organisation and accompanied almost all their participants.

[36]The organisation gave me access to the e-mail contact details of the alumni, who I asked about their willingness to participate.

[37]The first response rate was quite low, but it increased with a second, more personalised request. Some inquiries remained unanswered and therefore other volunteers were included in the sampling. Interviews were then scheduled with those who consented, or further appointments arranged due to forgetfulness, changes, or technical problems. Overall, I would like to note that the participation of almost all volunteers was associated with a great deal of effort and, in some cases, costs on their part in terms of ensuring time, space and internet for an online video call. Busy schedules, load-shedding, robberies etc. were not helpful. Therefore, I am incredibly grateful for the patience, time, and effort of each participant- in addition to their openness to spend several hours with me in the interview and trust to share profound experiences.

3.3. Methods

3.3.1. Data Collection

The primary data was collected through individual, *semi-structured interviews*[38]. Due to the research framework, the focus is on participant input, complemented by a more overarching and organisation-bound lens by two coordinators[39] (Appendix A: Interviewee roles).

A constructive-interpretive framework allowed volunteers' reflection on their personal and context-specific experiences and IdVS impacts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2016). A *semi-structured interview* nature enabled thematic focus, guiding structure while allowing further interviewee steered exploration (Magaldi & Berler, 2020; Witzel, 2000). This is crucial due to the research's exploratory and interdisciplinary component, but necessary degree of comparability (Witzel, 2000). Furthermore, it counteracts researcher/ theory biases, facilitating a flexible deductive-inductive approach with a natural interview flow (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Galletta, 2013; Helfferich, 2014). The interview guide[40] table (Appendix B) builds on the operationalisation following the volunteer's trajectory. Starting with their background prior[41] to the IdVS, which enables contextual and individual understanding of the person, their predispositions, and potentially relevant factors prior to Germany. Next, their IdVS experience abroad is thematised including everyday project- and leisure-activities to comprehend experiences, factors, and changes in the immigration country. Challenges and coping behaviour therein are subsequently illuminated. The penultimate section specifically reiterates perceived (capability) changes due to IdVS participation. Finally, to identify lasting change and post-change experience, contributions to personal or professional lives are centred. Overall, an open-dialogue atmosphere was created, characterised by spontaneous questions and researchers' reactivity (Helfferich, 2014).

[38]Via Microsoft Team video-call

[39]One coordinator, Alinda, is from the same organisation. The second one is Madala, who is familiar with this research's organisation and works together with them at times. In the role of coordinator, however, he supervised South African *weltwärts* volunteers for a similar organisation. Whenever cited, they are marked by a '*'.

[40]This guide was used for all interviews. In the case of the coordinators, however, the questions were posed in a way that enabled them to answer the questions for the (assessment of) supervised volunteers and based on their overall past work experience. Additionally, organisation-specific questions were added to obtain a better understanding of processes and the coordinators' role therein. In Madala's case, it was necessary to adapt and supplement some initial questions to capture his previous experience with *weltwärts* and concrete work in the other organisation and their implementation.

[41]It further allows a customised and more relaxed interview experience for the interviewee and the exploration of potential biases and limitation.

Considered potential limitations include low comparability despite guidelines yet limited depth and openness, interviewer's conditioning and power dynamics, subjectivity, and social desirability[42] (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Savin-Baden & Howell Major, 2013). Used prevention-mechanism[43] include promoting honesty, confidentiality, non-judgement, and self-reflection (Charmaz, 2014).

3.3.2. Data Analysis

The analysis of the qualitative data follows a deductive-inductive approach (D-IA), namely *qualitative content analysis (QlCA)* based on Mayring. *QlCA* is ideal for testing theoretical assumptions and analysing trends and patterns systematically (Schreier, 2012). Using the D-IA allows testing the theoretical framework while remaining open to participants' impulses (Mayring, 2000). The deductive codebook, based on existing theories and findings, uses indicators from the Operationalisation Table (see Chapter 3.4). Those were tested, adapted, and extended by inductive codes, to ensure maximum validity, combined in a final codebook. This was applied[44] to our transcribed interviews, focusing on coding units comprising multiple sentences (Mayring, 1994). Relevant evaluation units hold insights into *weltwärts* impacts (focused on participant's capability) and crucial factors shaping the overall IdVS experience. Followed by categorisation, prioritisation, synthesis and concluding[45], all while accounting in *QlCA*-manner for the data's context (Mayring, 2000).

QlCA limitations like possible researcher subjectivity, limited generalisability and replicability are navigated by self-reflection, analysis revisions and thorough documentation (Mayring, 2000). Efforts to account for hard-to-record non-verbal communication were made. Due to the qualitative

[42]They might affect the interview process, including its atmosphere, direction and (validity of) responses.
[43]Those were carried out by the researcher to create an open and safe space for participants and recognise own positions and contain their influences.
[44]Using the Software Atlas.ti
[45]Based on the research's aim and the focus set by the volunteers
Here, factors and changes repeatedly mentioned by interviewees were taken up. In addition to the frequency, however, aspects that were emphasised as important by volunteers or rated as such in the opinion of researchers were also included. The focus was also on highlighting previously undiscovered or neglected aspects rather than highlighting established findings. Overall, however, they were all coded (leading to over 1050 quotations), then reduced and prioritised while synthesising and summarising this work.

nature, causal claims and generalisations are approached cautiously, serving as initial steps[46] (Charmaz, 2014).

3.4. Operationalisation Table

Following the theoretical framework, this chapter operationalises the IdVS experience (Appendix C). Here, IdVS experience refers to the happenings, factors and changes associated with the course and context of *weltwärts*. The first part therein focuses specifically on the IdVS time in Germany with the following dimensions: Firstly, the 'Immigration Environment' encapsulating contextual factors and dynamics in Germany. Furthermore, interpersonal 'Interaction', the 'processes of change' of volunteers is captured. In transition to the second part, the 'programme interface', dedicated to the policy and programme underlying the experience including aspects such as its implementation, objectives, and context. Lastly, pre-, and post-service period factors are captured with the 'emigration environment' and contextual factors, alongside 'Individual characteristics' covering the entire period, with the participants capabilities and sociodemographic predispositions.

Altogether, the dimensions are not exhaustive nor exclusive and the 'higher-order-construct'[47] of some is recognised. However, given this work's scope and general approach, they serve as a starting point.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical standards holds great relevance when conducting research. Therefore, the data was collected confidentially with the participants consent[48] and privacy protection measures such as anonymisation[49] of involved organisations, interviewees and salient characteristics taken (Halperin & Heath, 2020). Research purposes and possible implications for participation were

[46]These require further research.
[47]Meaning some of the dimensions are so broad or loaded that they could stand as a concept themselves with their own sub-dimensions etc. However, given our exploratory nature and the limited scope of this research, the decision to use them as dimensions was made.
[48]The consent of the participants was recorded in writing and additionally from the board of the sponsoring organisation obtained.
[49]Pseudonyms were given to participants, recognisable features such as locations. Furthermore, the names of the *weltwärts* organisations named here in this study, such as IO, to PoA ('projects') etc., were omitted or often only described based on their function or area of activity.

repeatedly discussed, with option for withdrawal, skipping questions or obtaining further information throughout the research (Halperin & Heath, 2020). Overall, the participants' well-being, requiring flexibility, empathy and adaptability was a priority.

Furthermore, researchers' possible biases[50] shall be recognised, reflected, and prevented, such as: Stemming from one's socialisation[51], potential legacies of traditional 'development'-thinking, insufficient context sensitivity and misunderstandings (Broszinsky-Schwabe 2009). Furthermore, for influences from previous context-experiences in South Africa, with *weltwärts*[52] and power dynamics[53]. Moreover, avoiding incorrect reporting biases, thus withholding or distorting of information to the researcher's advantage (Halperin & Heath, 2020).

Finally, regard migration-related and context-specific factors to prevent reinforcing or normalising of colonial racial thinking, hierarchisation and prioritisation of 'White knowledge' (Kothari, 2006), stereotypical, often Eurocentric portrayals and 'North-South division' (Bakewell, 2008; Geiger & Pécoud, 2013). Further acknowledged is that the volunteer' label and scope of this research fails to capture this group's heterogeneity or individual trajectories (Chikanda et al., 2016). Additionally, the disregard of other *weltwärts* actors was accepted to deliberately focus on the vital perspective of participants (especially Africans), often underrepresented, or merely treated as 'projects of development' (Bergmann, 2020; Glick & Schiller & Faist, 2010).

In summary, to enhance our understanding of IdVS impacts and process, this qualitative research collects in semi-structured interviews insights from former participants, which are analysed with D-IA of *QlCA*. Therefore, realistic, and often underrepresented experiences were captured, offering an exciting and exemplary case. The research, guided by ethics considerations, operationalises the IdVS experience from emigration country and individual characteristics to immigration environment and programme interface, besides interaction and change processes. The results are presented in the following chapter.

[50]Such as of 'Africa'
[51]In this case in the East of Germany
[52]Here as a volunteer, alumni and coordinator
[53]In particular, between volunteers, organisation and researcher

4. Analysis

This analysis builds on interviews[54] with former participants and two coordinators, following an interdisciplinary lens. Their aim is to broaden our IdVS understanding, by investigating change resulting from *weltwärts*-participation, and in chapter 4.2 crucial factors therein, explaining differing perceptions and experiences. Summarised in 4.3, they reveal more nuances in change process, extent, and thematic scope, going beyond objectives and capture factors from pre- to post programme-experience, therefore going beyond *CCA*[55] focus. Quickly it becomes evident that IdVS is "messy in terms of people"[56] (Cebisa) with their complex experiences.

4.1. Changes through *weltwärts* Participation

In line with theoretically informed expectations[57] and policy objectives, perceived change during the *weltwärts* shows. However, a more differentiated understanding of unfolding capability changes, especially regarding its thematic scope (Chapter 4.1.2), process, extent, scope, and overall evaluation[58] (Chapter 4.1.1).

4.1.1. Change – some General Remarks

Contrary to a large body of literature and reading of policy objectives, change is not a uniform process, but has different appearances and outcomes. Those show variations and nuances when it comes to process, scope, and extent of IdVS informed changes.

In terms of process (nature), *deculturation* besides *acculturation* processes show. However, against the often-focused notion of 'acquisition of new and abandonment to full neglect of old'[59]

[54]All content is based on semi-structured interviews following the interview guide (Appendix B) and thereby mainly focusing on participants' responses, complemented by coordinators' insights.
[55]Or similar concepts and theories in academia or aspects focused on in practice, which specifically focus on the intercultural component of those programmes.
[56]„Exchange programs are very, they're very messy. If I have to say, it's it's a roller coaster of emotions, if you think about them. And not messy in terms of how they are organized, but messy in terms of people. They just have a different feeling to do the same thing, […] so my experience would be different [to others]." - Cebisa
[57]From various fields such as intercultural studies
[58]Here, volunteers themselves assess the change (especially in capabilities) because of participating in IdVS. This is strongly based on their own perception and does not evaluate the extent to which policy objectives and outcome match.
[59]Often highlighted in the intercultural but also IdVS literature focusing on diplomacy etc. (see Kim, 2017 or de Lima, 2007)

rather the expansion of the former 'encultured system' is highlighted by the interviewees. Overall, multiple [60] processes of acquisition and expansion through the 'new', often only partly abandonment and rarely (full) neglect of capabilities, in various frequencies[61] are mentioned. Nuances rarely or insufficiently thematised [62] are furthermore their concurrency, at times contradictions, overlaps, transitions, and reciprocal effects, moving reversibly[63] along a continuum, see here:

> "I sort of like detached from whatever teachings and whatever values my mom just put out there for me to grab. […] [but] I didn't really lose them. I think once I got home, they just came back" – Fundiswa

In terms of extent, participants perceive IdVS as a "life-changing opportunity [...] [shaping] part of the person that I am now"[64], to more reticent, no lasting or specific[65] changes. Extending often-binary views on change[66], our findings highlight various degrees. Thereby, volunteers with previous skills report a low extent of change for similar activities but greater for new learning areas (see example[67]). While further similarities exist, their extent differs per person, the aspect and its nature considered – differentiations hitherto often generalised in theory and practice.

In terms of scope, a large body of literature focuses on certain capability changes only[68], with lenses steered by disciplines or formal programme aspects[69]. However, our findings reflect a

[60]Changes range from acquiring new skills, abandoning former attitudes to neglecting personality aspects or expanding knowledge. All of which may be diving into different thematic areas.
[61]Thus, e.g. expansion is more frequent than neglect of existing or acquisition of new capabilities.
[62]In academia on IdVS and only (incompletely) made in praxis, often for the sake of promoting (the achievement of political/ common) programme goals without any claim to an all-encompassing picture. Hence, overlooking changes or only highlighting the targeted ones, as seen in multiple evaluations.
[63]Change does not go from 0 to 100, but as a process takes time, practice etc. Hence, transitions from one stage to the next, forth, or backwards can be noted.
[64](Sindiswa)
[65]A great number of volunteers rather names or assigns (only) specific changes in capabilities, rather than an overall effect to the IdVS experience.
[66]As merely 'yes change occured or no, it did not
[67]Nomlanga explains "when I got there [Germany] yeah I was I was a good coach still I had all the the the the facilitation skills", hence the extent of change was rather limited with regards to facilitation, while he emphasises "there's a lot, lot, lot and lot of skills that I gained" for example "for the first time speaking a foreign language" or competencies associated with working in an international environment.
[68]Deardorff is one of the only authors pointing out these nuances and furthermore the dimensions of conscious-unconscious, intentional-unintentional change (2018).
[69]*Weltwärts*, like other policy-based migration programmes, draws among other e.g. links to the 2030 Agenda.

broader scope of change [70] encompassing unintended [71] ([non-]persistent), sometimes even contradictory, effects and areas within the programme, see (4.1.2 and) here:

> "Staying in Germany for a year, being there alone, I think also like helped me a lot in, in, in terms of healing and [...] overcoming the passing of my mom" – Enzokuhle

In terms of assessment, contrary to most literature[72], the change from the IdVS experience is only sometimes perceived as positive, but predominantly as neutral and occasionally even negative. Decisive for the assessment seem their recognised usefulness, applicability, and worthiness[73]. Thereby, the return period is of great importance[74] as evident here:

> "I tried to make the best out of the skills I learned [...] but maybe the places of assignment, if they could be aligned to the skills, maybe the interest of the volunteer […] that could be [more] fruitful […] cause when I got back here, I was no longer having kids that young"[75] – Ayabonga

Finally, when speaking about change, the interviews reveal expected influencing biases[76]. Thus, reasons for, e.g. overstatements of positive and programme-intended outcomes may include:

> "[...] when you're so busy with trying to get through the day that you don't take time to introspect" [77] – Sindiswa

[70]Further discussed in the next chapter 4.1.2

[71]Since the fulfilment of the policy objectives was not examined more closely in the research, we speak of unintended effects. However, their unanticipated and sometimes undesired character can also often be assumed from the unsystematic analysis. Proper research focused on 'side-effects' would be interesting here.

[72]Again, Deardorff seems to be one of the only authors from the studied literature pointing out possible negative effects (2018)

[73]Some volunteers report that the process was not worth the change. They furthermore suggest that volunteers' expectations on the *weltwärts* experience also play a crucial role in this.

[74]In more detail in chapter 4.2.3. Return to South Africa

[75]Longer version of the quote (LV, Appendix D)

[76]An attempt was made to take their influence into account to capture a broad and, above all, realistic picture of IdVS. This was attempted by recognising different perspectives, questioning, and understanding certain perceptions (throughout the entire research process and in the interview). For further points, see methodology on limitations and ethical considerations.

[77]Referring to the introspection upon return to South Africa. However, more volunteers indicate that also during the *weltwärts* year in Germany there is little time (available or taken) to reflect.

> "I just try to keep an open mind and positivity and above everything, remember the good times more than the bad times" [78] – Thando

Overall, the perceived change with its extent, scope, process, and overall assessment depends widely on the interviewee and their IdVS experience. As the analysis continues, the more nuanced, broad process and (at times biased) understanding of change is recognised.

4.1.2. Thematic Immersion

After focusing on 'change' itself, this chapter turns to its thematic (mainly attributive)[79] dimension. Therein, self, intercultural, social, and practical capabilities[80] dominate with unexploredness, frequency and sometimes uniqueness. While most show close relations to IdVS literature, they extend beyond adding further insights into bodily changes and intersections with attributive, intercultural and social dimensions.

I. Self

Aspects relating to oneself are strongly emphasised by the volunteers, particularly related to self-awareness and self-development. In line with Kim's considerations, experiences of "increased internal integration-a sense of inner cohesiveness and confidence" (2017, p.11) are shared by the interviewees. However, for the most part they go beyond the IdVS scope by addressing self-perception detached from policy objectives or *CCA* processes. Inner cohesiveness reaches much further here though self-reflection by creating a stronger connection to their previous trajectory, own being and future aspirations, as these examples[81] show:

> "It even helped me to discover myself. [...] to see where I come from as a person" – Nomlanga

[78] Despite the positivity bias mentioned here, reasons can also stem from effects of power dynamics, social desirability etc.
[79] This focus is determined by the research's scope and therefore set framework on especially attributive capabilities - predominantly along the personality, attitude, knowledge, and skills of a volunteer.
[80] While presented separately, note that the broad fields are often interwoven
[81] Further example (FE, Appendix D)

> "I think volunteering in Germany actually taught me to identify my strengths and weaknesses […] I learned a lot about myself in terms of who I really am, where I want to go." – Fundiswa

Thereby, the findings further highlight attributive changes – both work-related and beyond, such as increased responsibility, independence, determination and consistency, aspects overseen or possibly taken for granted in most existing literature. Yet, these show important accomplishments for participants, as this selection[82] illustrates:

> "I became a little bit more calm and collected […] I was just very like being a responsible person" – Lithalethu.

> "The whole experience […] I wouldn't say it made me who I am, but it really shaped me, because I feel like with that experience, I I really learned how to work independently and you know whatever you do, just give it your 110%" – Sithandwa

Subsequently, self-empowerment and self-efficacy arise, which also as the examples[83] below show further lead to actions regarding pursuing career or personal dreams more strongly:

> "I thought I wanted to be in politics […] I get to Germany, I'm exposed to all of these experiences, I realise that actually psychology is the way." – Noxolo

> "I think going on the volunteers service, […] it made me a bit more confident to pursue things that really mattered to me." – Leeto

However, isolated interesting evidence also indicates downsides as in those cases:

> "People are actually losing themselves […] moving away from the principle of Ubuntu"[84] – Madala*

> "I sort of like detached from you know like how I did things or how I was taught to do things. Because I wanted to fit into whatever lifestyle I was having there [in Germany]"[85] – Fundiswa

[82](FE, Appendix D)
[83](FE, Appendix D)
[84](LV, Appendix D)
[85](LV, Appendix D)

II. Intercultural

As expected, changes of an intercultural nature are observed, mainly focusing on this case's South-African-German context. In line with IdVS literature, focusing on the immigration country[86] - often in comparison to South Africa. Thereby, insights into everyday life[87] are primarily gained, but also on specific though varying topics[88], as these interview extracts demonstrate:

> "You normalise conversations around anxiety. You normalise conversations around Black Tax […], that a woman can become and be a fully fleshed whatever without this […] limit that we grew up having in South Africa, that a woman cannot have it all."[89] – Cebisa

> "There is no privacy [in South Africa], [...] in Germany it's respected [...] But then, I think the one thing that I missed from here is being able to walk in the streets and greet someone and smile at a person without feeling awkward [...] asking a person 'how are you?', you know, letting loose" – Fundiswa

Those, as predicted in our theoretical framework, often go along with increased open-mindedness, tolerance, empathy, cultural sensitivity, and awareness towards other nations, which e.g. reduce stereotypical thinking. Partnered with increased flexibility, adaptability, and perspective-taking ability, 'functional fitness'[90] in the German environment – sometimes showing initial 'identity building' steps in line with homonymous theoretical notions - are enabled, see:[91]

> "If you are put in a country where there's there's a whole different language you you have to be a person who is flexible" – Noxolo

> "You'll become more German" – Thando

> "I'm 70:30, 30 South African, 70 German, where it's more punctuality, more understanding of what the plan, what the task, what we have to do for the rest of the day."[92]– Sipho

[86]Those rank from public diplomacy literature perceiving IdVS as a diplomacy tool to focus of the interdisciplinary intercultural studies' focus on the 'host country' (as seen by Kim, 2017) with the *CCA* process and other fields.
[87]Including ways, customs, and peculiarities etc.
[88]Ranging from work ethics over sustainability to mental health, gender equality, energy crisis and recycling (FE, Appendix D)
[89](LV, Appendix D)
[90]Direct link to Kim's intercultural transformation (2001)
[91](FE, Appendix D)
[92](LV, Appendix D)

"I learned from weltwärts, that to be open minded and just cut stereotypes" – Ayabonga

Our found attributive changes however, elaborate upon a theoretically strong 'host-country bias'[93] by highlighting a strong dual-lens perspective of both programme countries involved (including South Africa). Moreover, they reflect a multitude and diversity of 'culture' therein but also beyond those national borders, e.g. to African neighbours. Overall, also local to occasionally global level[94] or overarching application to social (often marginalised) groups such as homosexuals, women and more becomes apparent, e.g.:

> "Growing up in your village such things [making fun of homosexuals] it was normal for me […] and in Germany […] you talk about things. I felt like I regretted the person I was before." – Ayabonga

> "I'm more aware of a lot of things going on globally. So now even the decisions that I take are not just from a perspective of someone who grew up in [Name] Township" – Sithandwa

> "I would usually just like, I am a Zulu man, I keep to myself. […] But I've then since [Germany] been open and I get to understand other you know races or nationalities and cultures like I really tolerate them." – Daluxolo

III. Social

The in intercultural literature often-focused daily scope is punctured by the programme interface and its multiple local (German) to international actors engaging in everyday-life to specific opportunities such as seminars, alumni networks etc. Thereby, intercultural aspects, such as tolerance, openness, and empathy integrate fundamentally into participant's overall social interactions, relationships, and networks, see here[95]:

> "I've since learned that you just need to give people a chance, get to know people and also allow people to get to know you, so to not be stingy with myself" – Noxolo

[93]As seen in Kim (2017) and thematized by De Haas (2021)
[94]All of which foremost linked to the participants own lived experience
[95](FE, Appendix D)

> "[I] developed ways of building relationships and and managing relationships with also experiencing obviously conflict" – Leeto

Affected by these changes are the existing networks: Contrary to often by IdVS literature and programmes' social effects emphasised 'positive' and 'expansion', nuances on varying size, intensity, durability show among them reduction and change, often burdened with expectations of prior relationships, see here:

> "I became a new person here [in Germany] […] I matured a lot. […] I couldn't relate to my age mates anymore, especially when I came back" – Noxolo

Admits expectations by others and in line with collective programme effects[96], social and attributive effects show intersections as Altruism and from this social commitment of (former) participants intensifies, e.g.:

> "It [Germany] made me motivated and it created a platform for me to I don't know - It sounds very cheesy, but to be the person that I want to see in this world and just be involved." – Fundiswa

IV. Practical

More cognitive programme effects change the participant's attributive capabilities, most prominently German language competence. Furthermore, specific hard skills linked to leisure activities like sports, general day-to-day competences like budgeting and often project-related competencies such as[97]:

> "What the project allowed me to do was teach and [that] through different methods[98], […] and the language skills that I learned" – Leeto

> "Working with the children that on its own it's it's a skill, like which is part of my work experience" – Ayabonga

[96]As highlighted by Campbell and others
[97](FE, Appendix D)
[98]For example, experiencing mixing grades, peer learning exercises etc.

> "I learned a lot of new things there in terms of how to get around doing your admin, managing your time" – Sithandwa

Above all, while professional and personal changes occur, a chorus emphasises: "I gained a lot of soft skills like your emotional intelligence [...] but not hard skills" (Noxolo). This often stems from missing alignment between competence-changes and individual's interests, existing skills, and realities upon IdVS end[99].

4.2. Factors influencing Capability Change and IdVS Experience

The comprehensive theoretical framework already foreshadowed a multitude of influencing factors, with this research bringing forth the importance of emigration setting, overall social context, participant's capabilities, obligatory societal norms, spatial and programme frame. We thereby follow participants *weltwärts* journey, from South Africa to Germany and back, making initial steps[100] in identifying relevant factors.

4.2.1. Pre-IdVS Times

Right at the beginning, the lack of attention from theory to participant's trajectory prior to IdVS participation, which is inscribed in the individual characteristics, is reflected in our results. They shape and prepare the volunteers, serving as a starting point from which they embark on and relate to in the IdVS.

I. Emigration Setting: shaping Individual's Predisposition

It becomes evident that many expectations, behavioural patterns, and consequent experiences in Germany can be traced back to previous life circumstances and habits. Overall, the findings reveal existing capabilities such adaptivity, openness, strength, resilience, positivity, ambition, etc. These

[99]Ayabonga had previously been involved in the supervision and implementation of computer literacy programmes and courses on information and technology in a South African learning organisation. He assumed that he would probably study something along these lines after his *weltwärts* year. However, he was unable to continue these skills in his PoA, a kindergarten (see Appendix D)

[100]This paper cannot provide sufficient scope for details on direction, precise distinctions between volunteering experiences and more.

stem from the interplay of socio-demographic factors, especially socio-economic status, which determines individual's living situation and liberties as emphasised by migration literature[101]. In addition, Race, Ethnicity and Culture, play a role in determining lifestyle and mentality. A person's social environment is also formative, defining certain 'roles' such as daughter, *Township*-inhabitant, Zulu, coach etc. Furthermore, concrete experiences of moving and exchanges, an autonomous, challenging lifestyle, responsibilities etc., manifested in skills to built-up during IdVS, see here[102]:

> "I would say, most of the skills [...] are the skills which I came with. So now [...] it was just strengthening them more."– Sipho

> "When you come from a poor background. You not only, I promise you, you not you don't get only in [to Germany] poor financially, but mentally[103]" – Nomlanga

Interwoven are those with factors such as gender, religion, faith, and nationality identity, which, however per se, are not decisive for the experience.

Furthermore, the interviews highlight - again in line with migration studies emphasis - macro-level conditions[104], especially of socio-economic factors, such as social inequality, unemployment, crime, and perceived lax governance[105], shaping the national landscape. Simultaneously characterised by a strong socio-cultural dimension carried by Africanism and the *Ubuntu* philosophy of benevolence and humanity. Overall, these contemporary challenges and opportunities affect the individual.

4.2.2. IdVS in Germany

Based on this starting position, volunteers embark on *weltwärts* in Germany, navigating and negotiating familiar and new realities. In the immigration environment, decisive are participant's

[101]In our framework building on Carling and De Haas
[102](FE, Appendix D)
[103](LV, Appendix D)
[104]All factors if not explicitly named in the interview stem from the historical context of South Africa, predominantly decades of Apartheid, Colonialism, and displacement of indigenous population with the European Settler and following legacies.
[105]i.e. the lack of sufficient intervention by the government to address certain issues and problems

bodily characteristics, programme, and location-specific structural conditions and especially the social environment of the volunteer in which socio-cultural factors are negotiated.

I. The Individual

As touched on in the previous chapter, the participant's individual predispositions play a decisive role, especially bodily and attributive capabilities[106]. While IdVS literature predominantly emphasises attributive capabilities as by IdVS influenced element, our findings demonstrate their role as influencing factors. Expanding Kim's predispositions, besides personality, attitudes, and competences are vital for coping processes and outcomes of everyday interactions and tasks. Volunteers share e.g.[107]:

> "[...] it depends on how you see life. [...] everything that is thrown to my life [...] I prefer to see it not as a problem, but as a challenge, [...] something that you can conquer. You just need to sit down and find ways on how you can overcome them."– Nomlanga

> "Being in a predominantly White area and you're the only Black person there, another person would be like [...] 'I don't want to be here', but I took pride in being the only person." – Daluxolo

The quotes show the direct interweaving with socio-demographics and their negotiation in social contexts. They are also closely linked to bodily capabilities, revealing their foundational and conditioning roles' importance in a participant's life, receiving hitherto insufficiently accounted for. Especially wellbeing, which is linked to mental and physical health, often resulting from other aspects but also having (indirect) effects, proves to be an important factor. Therefore, volunteers' reports reveal negative effects of isolation, stagnation and in some cases anxiety and depression from lack of rest and balance[108] alongside unsettling situations[109], see:

[106]These are also the main focus of all capabilities in the interview
[107](FE, Appendix D)
[108]E.g. not enough sleep, time for freetime activities
[109]E.g. with co-workers, moving places, financial strains due to the disproportionately small stipend etc.

> "I was closing myself in […] I didn't want to do anything else [...] and so it it left little room for me to make friends. It left little room for me to experience the life in Germany as I should" – Thando
>
> "The depression part, like I was never [...] that low in life" [110] – Lithalethu
>
> "I realised that I I just can't do this [language course] anymore. I'm so tired and I just developed an attitude to not care anymore. You know, I I I just felt so overwhelmed." – Noxolo

In contrast, 'good' bodily capabilities are achieved through life satisfaction and happiness, again often determined by a person's social context, e.g. relationships, networks. Leaning on Kim, their receptivity[111], and participant's functional fitness[112], but also numerous other factors[113] can enable positive engagement and participant's (sustaining) development. Finally, individual to more general coping mechanisms[114] including seeking support, self-problem solving including "radical acceptance[115]" (Cebisa) significantly influence wellbeing, overall experience, and their outcome[116].

II. Social Influences

An important role in coping, but above all in the overall *weltwärts* experience and participant's development, play social relationships and networks with varying intensities in both private and professional social contexts in Germany[117]. These range from vertical to horizontal connections,

[110](LV, Appendix D)
[111]including welcomeness, acceptance, support etc.
[112]The ability to navigate to conform to daily happenings
[113]Deepened in the following chapters
[114]Volunteers deal differently with challenges and setbacks, but certain patterns are found: Thus, they mainly become active, communicate, adapt to 'new' situations, and accept them - especially when a situation change is unlikely. Volunteers reporting bad experiences, especially at the place of assignment, report that above all" radical acceptance" (Cebisa) remained, and that "as soon as you you accept things, doors open up […] it gets easier" (Thando).

However, not all challenges should (have to) be accepted and instead necessary conclusions should be drawn and alternatives (even during the service) should be sought for the volunteers. From my own experience, however, I can report how difficult this is to realise in practice, due to structural problems and limitations of the programme. For the people interviewed here, their PoA were not extended for a further year and consequences were drawn.
[115](LV & EV, Appendix D)
[116]Both in the long term, in the form of changed capabilities, and in the short term in the situation itself
[117]There is often no clear distinction between the two, see this example: „It was mostly mostly like my friends were, uh, my colleagues and people that I work with"- Enzokuhle

with Germans to other Internationals, established during but also prior to IdVS[118]. Especially ongoing interactions between two individuals or larger entities, e.g. the PoA, expose volunteers to stressful situations that cause change. On the other handside, open-minded and welcoming individuals, especially Germans or those with similar experiences or background – however, contrary to Kim's remarks not groups but individuals, prove particularly helpful.

They predominantly have cognitive, but also symbolic effects, especially on bodily and attributive capabilities. Symbolically, participants assume certain (also stereotypical) roles[119] themselves or those ascribed externally [120] , e.g. (*weltwärts*) volunteer, (South) African, Black - with corresponding effects in social contexts. The people and resulting interactions can act as constraints, as apparent here:

> "It was so difficult working with her [boss] [...] she just made me really ah, she demotivated me"[121] – Fundiswa

> "You speak English to them, they would understand you right and they wouldn't speak back, so as to make things easy for you. […] I had to learn German the hard way" – Thando

Conversely, especially close relations and friends act as (emotional) support of symbolical and cognitive rather than material[122] nature. Following De Haas' *liberties*, they serve as facilitator for social participation including *acculturation* processes (following Kim, 2017) and learning new skills e.g. as in these experiences[123]:

> "[Friend] probably taught me the most about German culture because she [...] made an effort, [...] invited me to things. She showed me around, so she was a large part of my cultural experience. […] she helped to build my character a lot and having an open mind" – Leeto

[118]Previous contact, especially the ones lasting till the volunteer's return (when starting their IdVS in Germany) but also after its termination back in South Africa are generally useful and positive. (For example, see Appendix D)
[119]As previously seen in but mostly differing from the ones South Africa (For example, see Appendix D)
[120]Especially those attributes that are easily visible and dominant are emphasised here, while previous roles and supposedly important aspects are not (see Paige, 1993: 'visibility' as one intensity factor).
[121](LV, Appendix D)
[122]While sometimes connections to opportunities or materialistic resources (rarely money, rather in form of an old bike or upon *weltwärts* end by writing a 'letter of invitation' or volunteering when visiting the former participant in South Africa), example see Appendix (D)
[123](FE, Appendix D)

> "Some of the patients would think that they are my mother, [..] they would treat me as their child and that was quite nice, because my mom was in South Africa, and I really needed that." – Noxolo

Thereby, the manner of support is crucial, including adequate[124] assistance, creating opportunities and effective communication, whereas even their lack has affects[125].

> "I ended up befriending people within my project [teachers] [...], who taught me a lot [...], who ended up sort of mentoring me through the process [of lesson planning]. They were very patient, they shared resources with me." – Leeto

In the interviews, as Kim points out, the predispositions, especially social capabilities, are decisive by determining the interactions. It involves acknowledging and partly adopting experiences as a starting point for further engagement or change. But the distance to the previous social context also has an impact, for the good to bad, see[126]:

> „I'm queer, [and] even though South Africa is quite a liberal country, […] I grew up with a lot of oppression within my own, you know, safe space which is supposed to be my [muslim] family. And so my first experience of freedom, […] being able to be myself, was actually being in Germany. Because I didn't feel there were any eyes on me to truly criticise me in a way that would hurt"[127] – Leeto

> "The depression part, I was never going through that when I was back home, I was always a social person, having so much family around me and I was never alone. And I felt alone when I was that way [in Germany]." – Lithalethu

[124]The prerequisite of support not automatically mean the desired outcome - for example, a volunteer was confronted with explanations instead of active solution-seeking (see example below). Often active steps to change a situation took long or did not happen, for example see Appendix (D)
[125]Those are almost every time negative, but in the end might result into something positive. However, there are surely other ways for those consequences and their necessity should be strongly questioned as also put forward by some volunteers, for example see Appendix (D)
[126](FE, Appendix D)
[127](LV, Appendix D)

III. Socio-Cultural Dynamics

Contrary to the heavy emphasis on immigration socio-cultural dynamics, socio-cultural factors, and dynamics while clearly inherent and mainly translated into social context and behaviour, they seem not overwhelmingly dominant. Especially cultural factors, such as traditions, while recognised by the volunteers are not obligatory. This differs for 'host society's societal norms' (e.g. mentality, behaviour, ethics), especially for language - predominantly in the project but also beyond[128], see volunteer's experiences[129]:

> "You get people that don't even wanna speak English, you know?" – Nomlanga

> "If you're in another country, adjust your mentality for that country or else you'd have difficulties." – Thando

> "I sort of like detached from whatever teachings and whatever values my mom just put out there for me to grab […] [which] was not a good idea"[130] – Fundiswa

Thus, in line with Kim, the general 'host society's receptivity' and 'necessity for change[131] shape (mainly through direct environment) their conciseness. The latter varies greatly from minimal need (e.g. to celebrate festivities) to strong need (e.g. of understanding the language). In terms of receptivity, most volunteers report positive to neutral experiences in line with Kim's welcomeness and support, while a few share negative encounters presumably based on 'ethnic' disparity, exemplified in these extremes[132]:

> "I was really, really home at my place of assignment and the teachers or the educators and my boss made it very welcoming, as well as the parents [...]"[133]– Daluxolo

[128]Especially when working with children, but also in teams where individuals don't speak English (well) or simply don't (want to), but also when communicating with mentors or in everyday life when buying a bus ticket, etc.
[129](FE, Appendix D)
[130](LV, Appendix D)
[131]Conformity pressure after Kim
[132](FE, Appendix D)
[133](LV, Appendix D)

> "I was actually attacked by a security guard […] it was also like a reminder that [...] some people are nice, some people are not [...] And just maybe because you're Black and you do not look German to them"[134] – Enzokuhle

IV. Locational Elements

Factors emphasised in emigration, neglected in IdVS literature are 'host society's spatial environment'. However, the interviews show that volunteer's participation and learning opportunities besides their orientation are determined by Germany's physical and environmental factors. For the latter, winter is challenging, safety enabling, and nature characterises leisure activities, see:

> "Because I've been [near the sea] I learned skills such as Supping, longboarding, […] how to drive a boat." – Daluxolo

Beyond that, physical factors are particularly decisive for local offer availability and accessibility. Therein, the transport and institutional infrastructure, e.g. to museums, theatre, events etc. for villages is less diverse and developed than in cities. For many, the result of poor access is suffering wellbeing. Alongside their size, demographics, diversity, people's receptivity, and general connectivity matter – also in conjunction with predispositions[135] when shaping volunteer's experience and changes, see below[136].

> "To meet a lot of people […], the [busy] work life, student life, […] different faces every time. […] The city was great, I enjoyed it so much. It was so many sightseeing that you can do […] [also] which made me feel part, […] was to meet friends in the Wohnheim that were from different countries."[137] – Thando

[134]Enzokuhle describes a sceanrio of racial profiling where he is the only one being stopped from entering a club with his German friends, needing to identify himself, which is faced with the questioning of his document's credibility and being punched in the face in the wake of the reasoning.
[135]Predispositions shape how a person deals with the new environment. It also shows that volunteers from a previously bustling environment find it more difficult to find activities in villages than someone who has previously spent a lot of time in nature.
[136](FE, Appendix D)
[137](LV, Appendix D)

> "Living there let in a tiny bit of anxiety and depression, because […] there's absolutely nothing that you can do outside of that you go to work, you come back home […] There's only probably three people who are young people, you're the only brown person […] I didn't connect with so many people because I was in a tiny village"[138] – Cebisa

V. Weltwärts Interface

Special influence further derives from the *weltwärts* programme interface, closely linked to Carling's eponymous immigration interface though extending to the exchange experience in Germany. It sets a framework of liberties such as pedagogical support, administrational assistance with insurances, visa etc. and but also regulations, which characterises everyday life, such as mandatory working hours, holidays etc. as complained about here:

> "We work too much, and it takes away the opportunity to learn more about the country or to just exchange more about your culture. [...] If we weren't working, we were going to German classes [...]" – Fundiswa

The PoA, where volunteers spend most of their time, is at the heart of *weltwärts*, heavily shaping experience and impact. Therein, thematic focus, the interaction within the team (including appreciation and hierarchies) along with the degree of self-expression and development of the volunteers are crucial, see[139]:

> "I was much more creative [...] I was more into outside and gardening" – Ayabonga

> "It felt more like working than volunteering […] There would be no room for us to even put-up suggestions to our employer. [...] there's no room for community service or intercultural exchange program"[140] – Thando

Furthermore, the implementing organisation[141], responsible for the volunteers' accommodation, linking them with other stakeholders such as mentors but also other volunteers, mediating to ministries, organising language courses and seminars, assisting with any other concerns etc.

[138](LV, Appendix D)
[139](FE, Appendix D)
[140](LV, Appendix D)
[141]Based on policy and programme ideas from governing bodies

fundamentally shape their stay. Additionally, it creates through the *'Gemeinschaftswerk'*[142] a pre-established crucial entity for support and access to *weltwärts* seminars, events and beyond, see[143]:

> „Our coordinator, [Name], she was also just a rock. She was just someone we could speak to and she didn't make us feel as if whatever we were feeling was irrelevant. She just understood and came up with different solutions for that."– Fundiswa

> "Those summits and seminars are really important. I think you learn a lot there and you also connect with people from all over." – Lithalethu

4.2.3. Return to South Africa

In line with Kuschminder, return incorporating the process where the local context meets the former volunteer and their experiences and developments made in Germany, is here also decisive.

I. Contingency Possibilities

The continuation of change depends on their adaptability to South African context, closely tied to socio-economic and structural (*weltwärts*) opportunities, besides experiences in the socio-cultural and social environment. If aligning, changes show to be sustainable. However, resistance or feasibility issues[144] complicate this, often requiring volunteers' contribution of more resources to uphold and ensure them. This can mean necessary changes, e.g. to the circle of friends, studies, addressing boundaries, etc. Generally, the process is besides tangible behavioural changes accompanied by perceptions and feelings of not belonging and being dejected, especially at the beginning but for some also later, whereas a few are also enthused, see here[145]:

> "When I went back, I knew there was just something was just not lining up anymore. And so for the whole year […] I was just like really heavily depressed." – Cebisa

> "Have you heard of veterans that have been to war? Right. And they come back and they don't fit in anymore. [...] I didn't fit in, right, and I just felt out of place." – Thando

[142] *Gemeinschaftswerk*: German for "joint operation"
[143] (FE, Appendix D)
[144] See chapter 4.1.1 on assessment
[145] (FE, Appendix D)

"It was a defining moment in my life, my my career choice is changed" – Noxolo

The importance of structural factors highlighted by Carling and De Haas, is particularly evident in the socio-economic context in providing "contingency" [146] (Thando) through job, or other opportunities upon IdVS end. Without this, participants lacking material or opportunistic support from family, organisations, etc. (mostly from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds[147]), are particularly impacted[148]:

> "When we come back home, there's literally nothing for us to do […] It's too late for us to apply for school. It's too late for us to actually go out there and find work, because there isn't any work. […] that's the most depressing part of finishing the year. But then […] you just don't let that demotivate you because of the experiences that you've had." – Fundiswa

> "It's like a hot-potato-dropping type of situation: We give you experience, what you do with it is up to you. [...] Nobody prepares you for the culture shock when you come back home."[149] – Cebisa

> "Lucky enough for me the learning centre was also there. I managed to go in back, like this process of staying with the skills which I accumulated in Germany" – Ayabonga

II. Weltwärts Capacities

Here, the programme interface plays an easing role for a few volunteers in realising existing or self-initiated options therein. However, most interviewees share their inevitably independent course often shared with disappointment and frustration in *weltwärts*. This ranges from the beginning, with volunteers feeling their (existing or required) capabilities and life path misalign with programme experience, to inadequate support structures upon *weltwärts* end, see[150]:

> "We need to have skills that we can actually get to use when we go home" – Cebisa

[146](LV, Appendix D)
[147]Which is the majority of our interviewees
[148](FE, Appendix D)
[149](LV, Appendix D)
[150](FE, Appendix D)

"[The implementing organisation] or weltwärts does not really give you life after that or does not give you [enough] opportunities […] you just have to find your way again. […] There's no babysitting, but at least there should be some guidance like there should be like a program"[151] – Thando

"We provide support for like each other and share opportunities with one another. […] And if it wasn't for me being part of the weltwärts program, I wouldn't have gotten those opportunities. [Additionally, with] [implementing organisation], with the Southern African Alumni Network, there's a lot of activities that we did after the volunteering programme"– Sithandwa

III. Contributing Social Context

Lastly, it appears that programme interface's institutional and emigration environment's socio-economic factors can be reinforced or lightened by the social environment. The interviews[152] emphasise above all that others' altered expectations can cause pressure and negative feelings, e.g.:

„There's a lot of pressure from your family and friends. […] you become a nobody, but you were somebody when you were in Germany, which shouldn't be the case […], the criticism of being unemployed or being careless"[153] – Thando

"People expect you that you come from a first world country, you have money. [...] That's the stereotype in in the Township. So, you get back and then [...] you are broke. […] it makes things difficult because even the community, the way that they see you is different now."[154] – Nomlanga

[151](LV, Appendix D)
[152]Especially with participants from low-income areas
[153](LV, Appendix D)
[154](LV, Appendix D)

4.3. Summary

In summary, reflecting on our theoretically informed expectations, the following findings emerge. As expected, interviewees change due to their *weltwärts* participation. Beyond that, they show a heterogeneous, broader, and nuanced portrayal of change, both regarding its content and complex process. The latter, combining cross-disciplinary findings on extend, nature and scope, going beyond *weltwärts* objectives. Furthermore, they broaden our scope to include practical skills and suggest shifting from literatures' focus on intercultural changes to broader applicability in personal and social dimension. Against theory and practice emphasis, interviewees not only express positive perception of change, especially if its result or 'trade-off' seem use- or worthless, especially post-*weltwärts*. In addition, the change process shows its tediousness, concurrency, contradictions, overlaps and non-linearity, building primarily on existing capabilities. The extent is person-specific, ranging from far-reaching to barely noticeable/relevant, particularly for volunteers without 'new' insights during *weltwärts*.

The interviews further reveal diverse factors shaping experiences, encompassing the time from pre- to post-Germany. Thus, mirroring Migration Studies' emphasis on the emigration country's role and intersection with volunteers' individual characteristics. Before *weltwärts*, South Africa's socio-economic and -cultural context are formative, acted out within one's social environment and determining an individual's trajectory.

As anticipated, those predispositions impact further in Germany, underlining bodily capabilities as foundational for partaking. Additionally, the social environment negotiates macro-structural aspects of the immigration context, serving as both constraints and support for participants. Contrary to strong literary references, cultural aspects apart from language tend to be less prominent. Like the more dominant societal norms, both are tied to the necessity to change here strongly determined by PoA and immediate surroundings rather than wider 'host society'. According to the interviews, life in Germany is characterised by sometimes hostile, sporadically welcoming, but mostly neutral dynamics. Similarly based on Kim, the important role of communication is confirmed, however, extended to general interaction, plus highlighting the importance of *weltwärts* actors, but further non-Germans and fellow volunteers rather than a

broader ‘ethnic group’[155]. Moreover, from migration scholars advocated spatial factors, determine availability, accessibility, and nature of participation in German society. From Public Policy indicated, programme effects manifest in a structural framework of liberties and constraints, rather than *weltwärts’* intended objective-realisation. At its core, the PoA occupying most of the volunteers' days, proves its significance. Similarly, the implementing organisation holds great value in supporting and connecting the volunteer, whereas its influence on the programme goal achievement appears less targeted and therefore comparatively limited.

Moreover, the policy, which accompanies volunteers from preparation to return-seminar in South Africa, is often criticised for its inadequate ‘contingency’ when returning and sometimes overall misalignment with and usefulness for volunteers’ trajectory [156]. Therefore, in line with Kuschminder’s elaborations, the importance of the policy’s return component is underscored. Its absence thereby reinforces social inequalities by highlighting the mitigating role of volunteer’s resources, which are strongly influenced by their socio-economic background. However, with some interviewees, it is evident that social context holds potential to ease social pressure and socio-economic factors back in South Africa becomes - adding to various factors influencing pre- to post-*weltwärts* experience.

5. Conclusion & Discussion

This research aimed to improve our understanding of IdVS et al., increasingly gaining momentum while insufficiently comprehended. This chapter therefore summarises the results of this interdisciplinary research on German *weltwärts* S-N from the underrepresented perspective of (former) South African participants. Accordingly, the sub-questions are addressed, research question answered, embedded in a broader context, and followed by recommendations.

[155]Here not really present in the way Kim portrays them
[156]From the predisposition when assigning PoA to envisioned future paths

5.1. Change in IdVS

The findings show a variety of changes resulting from the programme participation, meeting *weltwärts* objectives and beyond. While initially confirming expected changes in the self- and intercultural domain, both extend to a wider social context like openness or relationship management. By detaching from 'culture', universal values are emphasised that transcend ‘ethnic boundaries’ in line with discussions in Multiculturalism, Transnationalism, Global Citizenship et al. (Castells, 2010; De Haas et al., 2020). Furthermore, along with hitherto overlooked practical dimensions, the outcomes reveal a comparatively too narrow scope of evaluation within academia and practice, also addressed in critical, feminist, colonial theory et al.

Overall, the identified changes nuance established ones, especially unintended policy consequences such as increased determination, self-alienation, and depression plus introduce new aspects. In doing so, they illustrate besides positive also the prevalence of often non-thematised negative and neutral changes. Their (co-)existence underlines a superficial and myopic focus criticised in broader policy and programme evaluation (Patton, 2018 & Weiss, 2009).

This is reinforced by other found nuances: Thereby, changes show varying degrees of extent, from little to no effect. Furthermore, when looking at scope and process nature[157] per individual or whole case, the range of heterogeneity, contradiction, concurrency, non-linearity, possible interdependence, highlights the complex process character of *CCA* (Deardorff, 2018). It further demonstrates its potential as constraining to enabling factors themselves, intersecting with debates on the effect of individual’s adaption process (Hall, 1966; Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009). Simultaneously, the differentiation of identified changes based on their usefulness and necessary ‘trade-offs’ to achieve them, counterbalances a dominant acculturation focus. Thereby, shedding light on participants’ trajectory and agency, their decision (influenced by policy and practice implications) to obtain or abandon aspects of their previous cultural system, (Kim, 2017; Labelle & Ogbu, 1978). This context- and person-specific note is generally evident among the changes reported by (former) IdVS participants, whereby key factors are discussed further in the subsequent chapter.

[157] The exception is studies on, for example, intercultural competence, where authors take a closer look at the development process, but also sometimes limit themselves to rather linear and one-sided descriptions (Spitzberg & Chagnon, 2009).

5.2. Factors in IdVS

In line with large-scale literature, our findings emphasise the importance of communication skills, yet emphasis the complex nature of ICC by capturing the importance of overall (also non-verbal) engagement within 'host society' dynamics and context (Kim, 2017). Therein, the volunteer's immediate social environment shows particular importance in negotiating socio-cultural norms, determining the 'need for change' and supporting to obstructing them. Therefore, underlining their crucial role in social identity building/ adaption and for effective immigration policies, raising question e.g. on social cohesion and cultural diversity (Ebaugh & Levitt, 2001; Hall, 2014). Furthermore, highlighting the call for holistic approaches, considering "situational variables and personal attributes" (Paige, 2015, p.1).

The latter, prove also relevant in this research: Here, individual characteristics of a person strongly determine their situational responses and outcomes. They build on experiences and livelihoods prior to IdVS, determined by the the interplay of country-specific, socio-cultural-economic, and individual socio-demographic factors. Thus, underlying macro-structural and emigration country influences also discussed in broader migration landscape (Carling & Schewel 2017; De Haas, 2010).

However, likewise underscore intersectional debates to understand unique sets of capabilities, attributes, social network, resources, and more stemming from interplay of multiple factors of one person (Bastia, 2014; Hill Collins, 2009). The findings underscore, for example, the significance of socio-demographic factors in an IdVS experience, such as the socioeconomic status and implications of increased visibility as a Black person in German society (Hill Collins, 2009; Paige, 2015). Besides those factors, they highlight the fundamental role of bodily capabilities such as (mental) health and wellbeing in IdVS and *CCA* (Crenshaw, 1991; Paige, 2015).

The programme interface, which is itself an influential factor, has a significant opportunity and actual responsibility to address these. The findings underline how neglecting it in theoretical considerations overlooks the fundamental structure of opportunities and constraints it lays for volunteers (Campell, 2012; Carling, 2002; Deardorff, 2018). Here, the potential of IdVS as a specialised form of formalized migration become apparent, e.g. in creating a joint network for

pedagogical and administrative support with personal direct contact points. Concurrently, it sets formative thematic alongside context-structural markers through the volunteer's placement.

Related to this, another factor emerges: locational elements, which determine the offer, their accessibility and therefore opportunities to engage in and with the immigration environment. It aligns with considerations on Immigrant Incorporation in promoting inclusion and social cohesion (Portes & DeWind, 2007). Similarly, structural factors are relevant upon return and programme completion, especially for support services and employment (Kuschminder, 2017).

This also raises questions about the programme interface's return component, its effectiveness, and possible continuities, ensuring lasting impact (De Lima, 2007; Ebaugh & Levitt, 2001). Here, the insights of former participants point to an inadequate *weltwärts* return component. In this regard, King calls it the "unwritten chapter in the history of migration" (as cited Kuschminder, 2017, p.1) before increasing debates since the 2000s (IOM, 2023; OECD, 2024). The results, thus, echo voices to prioritize the return component, particularly including during the transition 'home' besides the programme-time, for their increased effectiveness and sustainability, and participants' wellbeing (Ebaugh & Levitt, 2001; Weiss; 2009). Furthermore, their affectedness by social to economic inequalities in the 'home country' become evident, thus, underlines the crucial role of programmes (and social networks) in mitigating socio-economic disadvantages (King, 2000; Labelle & Ogbu, 1978). Building on this, it raises fundamental questions about programme objectives, quality standards, responsibilities and more.

Lastly, by capturing factors from pre- to post-IdVS the results underline the necessity to move beyond an often-set immigration country bias and extend to the emigration country (De Haas, et al., 2020; Ebaugh & Levitt, 2001). Therefore, along with the programme contents, the findings underline the necessity for broader (timely) considerations of factors.

5.3. Enhancing established IdVS Understanding

Building on the above, preliminary reflections on how insights of former South-African *weltwärts* participants enhance the understanding of IdVS follow.

Firstly, they provide insights into IdVS beyond disciplinary boundaries, narrow-minded theoretical externalism, immigration country bias and top-down perspectives as stressed by advocates of their respective counterparts and biases (Bastia, 2014; De Haas et al., 2020; Kim, 2017). As emphasised by scholars or advocates like the Global Refugee-led Network, the participant perspective facilitates the gathering of rich and authentic data and overall, more profound, and comprehensive subject understanding, here in IdVS. These highlight overlooked aspects in academic considerations, such as the programme interface. Moreover, beyond static concepts, IdVS' emerging issues and alterability are captured, besides its interconnectedness (of aspects) inside and outside besides overall complexity.

They promise more reflective and critical analysis alongside theoretical understanding of programmes and their effectiveness (Campbell, 2012; Flyvbjerg, 2011). Rigid to self-confirming considerations are overwritten by the real-world experience (Glick Schiller & Çaglar, 2011; Patton, 2018 & Weiss, 2009). This clearly shows that while numerous IdVS objectives are confirmed, especially along cosmopolitan and ethical agendas (Ortiz Loaiza, 2020), their scope is inconsistent, multifaceted, thus non-universal (Bakewell, 2008; De Haas, 2010). Instead, multiple barely considered, non-indented, partially negative changes emerge, capturing IdVS more wholly (Deardorff, 2018; Raghuram, 2009). Furthermore, increasingly more challenges and mechanisms in *CCA*, including the increased visibility and tangibility of the deculturation process, appear. These guide practitioners in centring participants' well-being and reducing the 'trade-off' threshold by selecting and creating a supportive and inclusive environments. These reflect broader debates e.g. on 'successful' migrant 'integration' (De Haas et al., 2020; Portes & DeWind, 2007). Along with other factors (see 4.2), the effect of power dynamics within the programme shows, attaching expectations and conditions to the 'volunteer' label. Through the participant-insights, those and more can be recognised, counteracted and the actual impact of the programme be evaluated (De Lima, 2007; Glick Schiller & Çaglar, 2011).

Additionally, their temporal and geographical focus is exceeded by looking past IdVS's sojourn abroad. Thereby adding another example highlighting the limitations of short-term orientation and spatial immigration bias (Carling & Schewel, 2017; De Haas, 2010). The return period, thus, with its (improvable) contingency following programme completion, proves crucial for the (sustained) utilization of IdVS changes, not to mention volunteers' well-being. From here, the stressed importance of previous livelihoods and capabilities is underscored (Kuschminder, 2017; OECD, 2024). Contrary to reckless, simplistic IdVS narratives, they show multiple identities, manifested in social and systemic inequalities, including programmes - some, missing or nullifying volunteer's 'potential', i.e. existing capabilities (Béland et al., 2022; Hall, 2014; Labelle & Ogbu, 1978). Furthermore, illuminating beyond policy realm that IdVS concerns participants with desires, dreams, and expectations. In line with more holistic approaches, capturing IdVS as only one part towards their sustainable and profitable realization and overall life path (Creswell, 2018; De Haas, 2014; Sen, 1999).

Furthermore, context-sensitive data enables a deeper understanding of the involved environments and related unique challenges, reflected in people or structures in IdVS (Carling, 2002; De Haas, 2010; Paige, 2015). They indicate how macro- to micro-structural considerations may assist suitable programme incorporation and impact. Moreover, the study illustrates (the need to) provide space for representatives of the 'Global South' and challenge White Eurocentric assumptions. These help to realize and address legacies such as stereotypes etc. rooted in the programmes, development-nexus, Germany etc. (Bastia, 2014; Ziai, 2013). Otherwise, they counter often one-sided portrayals and underscore the urgency and gain of including individuals and knowledge from the 'Global South' at various programme stages (Escobar, 1995; Glick Schiller & Faist, 2010).

In conclusion, the insights broaden established horizons, create bridges, encourage critical reflection, and unlock neglected potential at various levels of the 'messy'[158] IdVS and beyond (Fontana & Frey, 1994; Kim, 2017). Above all, it reminds us that the 'diplomatic tools' concern people who, so far neglected, bring value for a better IdVS understanding and realisation.

[158] After Cebisa

5.4. Recommendations

Besides academic contributions, this research is relevant to policy makers and implementing partners in intercultural exchange with broader applicability. Drawing on the findings, I wish to give the below recommendations.

Firstly, look beyond the horizon and focus on neglected factors and results. They harbour untapped potential which, if unaddressed, could deepen or cause shortcomings. Therefore, unintended, and negative outcomes need stronger consideration to prevent self-confirmation. This is possible by following the personal development path, and further detects programme efficiency and long-term impact. This requires a broadening of spatial and temporal considerations, tying to the importance and necessity to account for the impact of emigration country for an effective and sustainable IdVS experience and understanding. Emphasising on the expansion of the return component, and overall alignment with participants' local conditions and trajectories. Primarily achieved, by promoting participant perspectives, but further embedment of successful mechanisms and insights from similar programmes or (interdisciplinary) research.

Building on the findings, this research highlights the necessity to critically reflect on the programmes' current state. Shortcomings need to be improved based on challenges and obstacles identified, here e.g. the well-being of volunteers or locational conditions. This requires besides active monitoring and flexibility, context- and cultural-sensitivity of the programme and its stakeholders to strengthen efficiency and inclusivity and tackle root causes. Corresponding adjustments should be geared towards sustainable feasibility, determinable through closer and genuine dialogue involving those on the ground like PoAs, mentors, etc. This requires asking fundamental questions about actual goals, commitments, and their implementation within the context of post-colonial legacies, regulatory requirements, and limited resources. Therefore, build on the potential of the committed and vivid network of alumni, civil society, and partners to meet the responsibilities arising from a complex human-centred programme.

Above all, the results illustrate the benefit and need to increasingly centre those affected! For one, their individual characteristics to obtain a greater, intersectional understanding of everyday realities and needs. Concurrently, to comprehend IdVS as (one) stage of their life-journey and adapt more adequately, sustainably, and inclusively thereto, requiring once again dialogue and

sensitisation of all stakeholders.

Commitments to 'mutual learning' and strengthening of international partnerships therefore require consideration on conceptual and decision-making fronts. For this, meaningful participation with partners from the 'Global South,' especially (former) participants themselves, is vital (Global Refugee-led Network, 2019). Available capacities instead of neglected, should be leveraged with the corresponding appropriate consideration and appreciation[159]. Active monitoring and firm responsibilities are necessary to improve established ('Western') power dynamics and structures. Alongside strengthening those involved, this contributes fundamentally to equitable and empowering cooperation and general development cooperation through securing the necessary 'seat at the table'.

[159]This includes counteracting tokenization and inequitable structures and dynamics, manifested e.g. in unequal financial compensation or harmonisation with ‚Global North' context conditions and many more.

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7. Appendix

Appendix A: Interviewee Roles

Table 1

Interviewee Roles

Alias Name	**Weltwärts Role**
Daluxolo (he)	Participant
Fundiswa (she)	Participant
Sithandwa (she)	Participant
Ayabonga (he)	Participant
Enzokuhle (he)	Participant
Sipho (he)	Participant
Thando (he)	Participant
Leeto (he)	Participant
Cebisa (she)	Participant
Lithalethu (he)	Participant
Nomlanga (he)	Participant
Noxolo (she)	Participant
Jabulani (he)	Participant
Alinda (she)	Coordinator
Madala (he)	Coordinator

Note. The real names were not used for anonymisation purposes.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

- **Beginning & Formalities**

[Create a calm and feel-good atmosphere]

- Beginning / Small talk
  - Thank you for participation

[While going through leave room for follow-up questions by Interviewee (IV)]

- Introduction of the interviewer (IR) and Research
  - IR background
  - Research interest & background
    - Framework of this research (university)
  - IR connections to the research topic
    - background experiences therein
  - Clarification of researcher role

- Formalities of the interview
  - Consent form (questions?)
  - Anonymity
  - Secure data storage
  - Confidentiality
  - Procedure of the interview (notes, recording, always room for break or move on to other questions, input and response, follow-up questions for IR clarification)
  - Clarify available time for the interview

[Start recording]

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- **Prepared guiding questions**

[Those serve as a vague guideline; the flow and prioritisation is set by the IV. Adapts to it and give input if needed. Questions can be reformulated to fit a more natural conversation flow. Some might be covered without being asked. Input going beyond is not stopped. Given its length, if time is running out certain questions closest to helping answer the research question shall be prioritised.

Judge for yourself whether a question can be asked in a certain moment or at all. Never pressure the participant to give an answer; uphold 'safe' space to share their experiences.]

1. **Life before weltwärts**
    a. Before you started your weltwärts service, what did your daily life look like?
        i. How was your living/family situation?
        ii. Were you following any professional or educational path by then?
        iii. What role and responsibilities did you have in your community/family before you participated in weltwärts?
    b. With your daily life - your work/school/family/…- were there any challenges that you were facing at that moment?
        i. How did you deal with them?
        ii. Did you manage to overcome them? If so, how?
    c. Did you have any connections that went beyond your community? If yes, which one?

2. **During weltwärts in Germany**
    a. When you started the weltwärts year, what project were you working and how did a day in your project look like?
        i. What were your tasks in the project and how did you manage them?
        ii. Were there any difficulties or challenges? How did you solve them?
    b. How did your daily life beside the project look like? How did you spend your free time?
        i. Were there any difficult moments or challenges?
        ii. How did you manage them?
    c. What kind of people -throughout your whole stay - did you connect with that are somehow still relevant for you today?
        i. How are they relevant today?

3. **Focussing on changes**
    a. Earlier on you spoke about [insert a change they mentioned before], did you notice more changes in yourself during this time? If so, could you elaborate on those?
        i. Can you share any specific skills or competencies that you believe you developed or enhanced while in Germany?
        ii. How did your attitudes or personality shift during your time in Germany, particularly?
        iii. Are there any particular resources or opportunities that you gained access to while participating in the program that are still of use for you today?
    b. So, in your opinion, what aspects of the weltwärts South-North program are particularly effective to support the growth of the participants? What has the program done well in this regard?

4. **Upon return/ after weltwärts end**

a. Since your volunteer year ended, what have you been doing?
    i. Where did your work or educational path take you upon return?
    ii. How has the rest of your life changed? (volunteer, family, friends)
    iii. Has your role in your family or friend group or more generally the whole community changed?
b. Reflecting on your earlier shared experiences in Germany - the things you learnt, skills you gained etc…. Do those still influence your personal or professional life today? If so, how?
    i. Are there any specific skills, attitude or personality changes that continue to influence your current life?
    ii. To what extent do the learnings or resources acquired there still play a role for you today? Can you give me examples?
    iii. Can you discuss any lasting friendships or connections you made during the program that are still relevant or useful for you today. If yes, can you share how they play a role in your life today?

5. Focused on disregarded weltwärts changes

a. Looking back on your participation in the weltwärts South-North program and your stay in Germany during that time, can you identify any changes in your capabilities - like your knowledge, skills etc. that you now regret or feel have had a negative impact? If so, could you elaborate on those.
b. Is there anything you have unlearned or discarded during the weltwärts year that had effects beyond that year? If so, could you share more about those experiences?
    i. Of those, is there any capability, resources or network that you wish you had not today?

6. Compliments & Critique

a. We now come to the last part… My question is, are there in your opinion any areas where you feel the program could be improved - especially linked to the topics we have spoken about so far?
b. What is it that you do like about weltwärts?
    i. What are they doing well?

~

7. Ending of interview

a. We have now reached the end of the interview. Do you think we forgot something? Is there anything you would like to add?

8. Follow up

a. Lastly, Would you be willing to do a shorter follow-up interview with me, if questions from my side arise?

i. Double check consent form!
    1. Check, if difficulties
    2. Agree on a day to send it back

b. [if unclear ask for] post processing
    i. Name
    ii. Age (now and during weltwärts)
    iii. Gender
    iv. Place of Birth
    v. Residence
    vi. Highest completed education
    vii. Current occupation (job, education)

9. Big thank you!

[stop and save recording]

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- **Interview post processing**

    - Take notes on
        - Date of interview
        - Location
        - Duration
        - Impressions
        - Take notes on what to improve

Appendix C: Operationalisation Table

Table 2

Operationalisation of the IdVS experience and influencing factors

Theoretical concept and definition	**Dimension and definition**	**Subdimensions (if present) and (exemplary) Indicators**
IdVS Experience The experiences in an international development volunteer service, based on a policy/ programme, involves a process of change when partaking in the immigration environment's everyday life. This, is shaped by several factors ranging from the participants' individual characteristic shaped by the enculturation process in the emigration environment, intercultural dynamics, contextual factors and interactions in the host environment and the overall structural frame set by the programme interface, creating liberties and constraints.	**Immigration environment** The conditions and context of the host country (from country to individual surrounding*), in which volunteers participate in the IdVS, is determined by historical, spatial, institutional, socio-economic, social, and cultural factors (1.) and intercultural dynamics (2.) (Carling, 2002; de Haas, 2010; Kim, 2017) *Here more distinct the region, community, social circle etc.	(1.) Reference to determining **factors of the immigration environment** (derived mainly[1] from emigration factors by Carling, 2002 and De Haas, 2010): • *Socio-economic* (economic and political factors such as labour market conditions, social inequality etc.) • *Institutional* (legal, administrative, and regulatory frameworks including policies, access to rights, institutions, and support therein) (Kuschminder, 2017[160]) • *Social and cultural* (networks, norms, values etc. showing in community relationship, support received therein, cultural beliefs, self-identification and more) • *Spatial* (physical and environmental factors such as climate, resources, urbanization) • *Historical* (Past happenings of importance with influence till today, ranging from legacies of significant events, colonial times, post-colonialism, including political, economic, social, and cultural aspects, social movements and change etc.) (2.) References to **intercultural dynamics** between immigration society and participant (or more generally other cultures) (Kim, 1988; Kim, 2017): • *Receptivity* (the support, welcomeness, openness, acceptance towards strangers and other ethnic groups, e.g. in the place of assignment, project environment etc.) • *Conformity pressure* (the need and pressure for other strangers and groups to adapt to the host society, e.g. by learning its language or social norms) • *Ethnic group strength* (the [perceived] place of one's group in the immigration society, enabling opportunities or obstacles, e.g. a strong ethnic group offering advice and support to newcomers) • *Ethnic proximity* (the ease of participation and linked competence development, e.g. rather similar ethnicities with similar cultural beliefs)

[160] Applied into this context from the emigration environment factors

Here, the IdVS period starts with the preparations in the emigration country, the main programme period in the host country and return trajectory upon completion of the service.	**(Communicative) Interaction** The participants' process of engaging and communicating - predominantly in the course of the IdVS and time in the host country - with groups, other individuals and self (Kim, 1988)	References to social and interpersonal interaction with a person or group from the host community or another, e.g. communication, engagement through mass media (social media, TV etc.) in various situations and sides (including work, fulfilling everyday tasks, with programme coordinator, dealing with challenges etc.), as well as with oneself when processing and preparing mentally ((intra)personal communication) (Kim, 1988; 2017).
	Process of change The dynamic adaptation steps due to the cross-cultural (stress) experience with the new (host) environment (but also upon return to the emigration context) (1.), facilitated by liberties and constraints (2.), resulting in temporary to lasting capability changes in the newcomer (3.) (De Haas 2010, 2014, as cited in Berlin, 1969; Kim, 2017; Kuschminder, 2017)	(1.) References to the (cross-cultural) **adaption process (nature)** due to learnings and stress experiences in the (new) host environment, where the acquired foundation of capabilities etc. (during the enculturation stadium) are challenged, reflected, and adapted – just as upon return with the emigration context (Kim, 2017; Kuschminder, 2017): • *Deculturation* (to fit the functioning of the new environment, aspects of the old foundation are suspended or abandoned - temporarily or forever, e.g. letting go of cultural beliefs, overwriting behaviors) • *Acculturation* (learnings and transformation take place to adapt to the host society's ways (e.g. see (3.) (a.) below) • *Assimilation* (the maximum convergence of acculturation, like a native) (2.) References to **liberties** or **constraints** (De Haas 2010, 2014, as cited in Berlin, 1969; de Haas, 2014): • *Positive liberties* (enabling factors for a self-determined and 'purposeful' life, e.g. financial and pedagogical support) • *Negative liberties* (the absence of obstacles, barriers and constrains, e.g. no visa-requirements, absence of xenophobia, missing entry barriers for participation in labor market) • *Constraints* (the opposite of liberties, preventing a self-determined and 'purposeful' life and presence of obstacles, gaps, limitations and restrictions, e.g. insufficient financial support, remote location with difficult access to society) (3.) References to the participant's **capability changes** (a.), its **extent** (b.) and **assessment** (c.) (De Haas, 2010; de Haas, 2014; Kim, 2017) (a.) **Capability changes** from the cross-cultural adaption process: • *Economic* (e.g. increase in money, learning resources) • *Social* (e.g. integration into host environment and expanding network)

		• *Attributive* (e.g. increase in functional fitness, hence succeeding in daily transactions in host environment and meeting own needs)
		  o Knowledge (e.g. improved in culture or country)
		  o Skills (e.g. improved language skills or host communication competence, adapting to norms and ways of host society)
		  o Attitude (e.g. increase in confidence, self-esteem, individuation and universalization, changed aspirations, abandoning own culture, tradition etc.)
		  o Personality (e.g. increased resilience, openness, identity perception changes)
		• *Bodily* (e.g. improved psychological health: less frustration and anxiety, unsettling mental and emotional state)
		• *Intercultural* (e.g. experiencing own migration story, increased sensitivity for other cultures, developing an understanding of global connectedness)
		
		(b.) References to the **extent** of capability changes, spanning from *minor to significant*, affecting *everyday life to nothing* (Béland, et al., 2022; Campbell, 2012; Kim, 2017)
		
		(c.) References to the **assessment** of one's own changes, ranging from a *negative to positive* perception (Deardorff, 2018)

	Programme interface The structural frame, in particular set by the policy and associated programme(s), which is determined by its context (1.), effects, nature and thematic scope (2.), implementation and execution (3.), shaping the opportunities, barriers and overall IdVS experience for participants (Béland, et al., 2022; Carling, 2002; Deardorff, 2018; De Haas, et al. 2020; Escobar, 1995; Hooghe & Marks, 1992; Ziai, 2016)	(1.) References to **policy and programme context**, thus their specific or more broad legacies of the related nexus (Béland, et al., 2022; de Haas et al., 2020), e.g.: • (Post-) Colonialism and Paternalismus (Escobar, 1995; Ziai, 2016) • Labour shortage, Anti-immigration sentiment, globalization etc. (De Haas et al., 2020) • Immigration environment (Carling, 2002) (2.) References to the **nature of the effect** (a.) their **thematic scope** (b.) and **outcome scope** (c.) of a policy or programme and the leading path – on the paper, as well as in reality's outcomes – here assessed by participants after completion (Béland, et al., 2022; Campbell, 2012; Deardorff, 2018) (a) **Nature of the effect**, meaning the characteristics or qualities of programme objectives and final impact (Béland, et al., 2022; Campbell, 2012): • *Material* (including access to money, resources, opportunities, e.g. to learn, financial support received through programme) • *Symbolical* (influencing identity perception and social interaction of the participation or society at large, e.g. through contract of participation and role as volunteer) • *Cognitive* (shaping aspirations and capabilities, e.g. broaden understanding of global issues and their connectedness, develop adaptability skills, create professional pathways leading to professional career choices furthering the fulfilment of Agenda 2030)

		• *Collective* (shaping civic engagement, e.g. increasing political activism or volunteering activities) (b.) **Thematic scope**, meaning the fields and content which the programme and its policy target) (Bettie, 2019; Deardorff, 2018; de Lima, 2007), e.g.: • Intercultural exchange (e.g. broaden the understanding and horizons for other cultures) • Capability development (e.g. improve skills and knowledge of youth) • Civic engagement (e.g. increase volunteer work in the region) • International or bilateral cooperation (e.g. to strengthen partnerships between the countries) • Pursuit of national goals (e.g. aligned with the Global Agenda 2030) (c.) **Scope of outcomes**, meaning the range of possible impacts as a consequence of policies and programmes (Deardorff, 2018; Kim, 2017) • *Intended to unintended* • *Anticipated to unanticipated* • *Desired to unwanted* • *Temporary to permanent* (3.) References to the **implementation of policy and programme execution** with its various element (Dimitriadis et al., 2021; Hooghe & Marks, 1992), e.g. • *Involved Structures* (e.g. to government agencies or non-governmental organizations) • *Actors* (e.g. ministry employees, project coordinator, mentors, host families etc.) • *Hierarchies* (e.g. from low to high) • *Responsibility distribution* between the different actors (e.g. pedagogical and administrational support by implementing organization, local guidance and contact point by mentors, political steering and responsibility by the ministry, joint evaluation and development of the programme) • *Interplay* (e.g. between conflict and harmonious and synergistic cooperation)
	Individual characteristics The individuals' characteristics of a person that distinguishes them from another– including their (1.) sociodemographic	(1) References to **sociodemographic factors** (Carling, 2002; Carling & Schewel, 2017; de Haas, 2010), such as: • *Age* • *Gender* • *Ethnicity or Race*

	factors and (2.) capabilities that shape a volunteer prior, during and after their IdVS, some of which might change due to the IdVS participation (Carling, 2002; De Haas, 2010; Kim, 1988)	• *Educational attainment*
		• *Religion*
		• *Socioeconomic status*
		• *Social status*
		• *Etc.*
		
		(2.) References to **individuals' capabilities** to determine one's own life or more specifically prepares participants for the intercultural experience (de Haas, 2010; de Haas, 2014; Kim, 1988; Sen, 1999)
		• *Economic* (material, e.g. clothes, money)
		• *Social* (existing environment and network, e.g. access to NGOs, tight connection with the community)
		• *Attributive*
		  o Knowledge (e.g. on culture, country)
		  o Skills (e.g. on language, host communication)
		  o Attitude (e.g. ambition, confidence, self-efficacy)
		  o Personality (e.g. resilience, openness)
		• *Bodily* (health and physical condition, e.g. fit and healthy, life satisfaction)
		• *Intercultural* (experiences with other cultures, e.g. family migration history, participation in exchanges or upbringing in a 'multicultural' community)

	Emigration environment The conditions and context of volunteers' sending country (from country to individual surrounding*) - where one comes from and returns to after the IdVS exchange with its historical, spatial, social and cultural, institutional, socio-economic factors that shape, prepare and challenge the volunteer prior the IdVS and upon return (Carling, 2002; de Haas, 2010; Kuschminder, 2017)	Reference to determining **factors of the emigration environment** (Carling, 2002; De Haas, 2010): • *Socio-economic* (economic and political factors such as labour market conditions, social inequality etc.) • *Institutional* (legal, administrative, and regulatory frameworks including policies, access to rights, institutions, and support therein) (Kuschminder, 2017) • *Social and cultural* (networks, norms, values etc. showing in community relationship, support received therein, cultural beliefs, self-identification and more) (Kuschminder, 2017) • *Spatial* (physical and environmental factors such as climate, resources, urbanization) • *Historical* (Past happenings of importance with influence till today, ranging from legacies of significant events, colonial times, post-colonialism, including political, economic, social and cultural aspects, social movements and change etc.)

	*Here more distinct the region, community, social circle etc.	

Note. For this table the following considerations apply:

I. The various dimensions cannot always be clearly distinguished from one another. Often there are overlaps and interactions between them – especially for immigration environment, interface, interaction, change and adaptation process. For the sake of clarity, however, these have now been assigned to one dimension.

II. All examples are taken from referenced literature. A dimension or sub-dimension may build heavily on one author, but examples may have been supplemented by others.

III. It is recognized that some of the dimensions could easily hold as concepts themselves with their own sub-dimensions and so on. However, given our exploratory nature and the limited scope of this research, the decision to use them as dimensions of 'IdVS experience' was made.

Appendix D: In-depth: Quotes

List of indicated longer version of quotes (LV) or further examples (FE):

[75]LV:

- "I tried to make the best out of the skills I learned like Pflege [English for: "care"] and pedagogics, like, yeah, looking after the kids [...] But I was more into, gonna probably study something like information and technology […] Let's just put it like that, like I knew what I was getting myself into, but maybe the places of assignment, if they could be aligned to the skills, maybe the interest of the volunteer […] that could be [more] fruitful […] maybe involve also the alumnis in the process of short listing candidates […] cause when I got back here, I was no longer having kids that young" – Ayabonga

[81]FE:

- "My confidence is like, yo, it's yeah, it's dope. So, I'm very proud of being Black. I'm proud of the stuff that I've managed to achieve there. I really left a mark the same way they left a mark on me." – Daluxolo
- "I was really like in touch with who I am. I was in touch with my feelings" – Enzokuhle

[82]FE:

- "It's an experience that gives you kind of shapes the way you navigate your life around other experiences. You know, it builds you, it builds, it gives you. I don't know ways that you could find yourself again. You know, it's a it's a personal journey, but it's also it's a personal journey that also advances your professional journey in a way" – Cebisa
- "I told my mind that anything is possible. Whatever you want to do, you can do, right. So when I came back, I came back with this fearlessness, that if I want to apply for something, I'm gonna get it. […] Just the confidence of knowing that if I could apply to Germany as a young girl and be able to make it […] and I existed alone in that country for the first time ever in my life. [...] The effects of these exchanges, whether good or bad, they have the power to change you and and you know you can just blossom into into a powerful person, you know, someone who is confident and who knows their place in the world, who doesn't question or doubt their abilities" – Noxolo
- "You know, before I went, I I was more reserved when it came to certain new opportunities and grabbing everything, but now it's more of ,OK. I want to do this. I can do this - more motivating myself. […] Or maybe taking a stand, if I see that something is not working out for me, or if I see that I'm not in a position that is very comfortable. Then I speak out and […] [create] a safe space for me to be myself and be able to do whatever I'm allowed to do." – Fundiswa
- "It has definitely shaped the way that I view my country firstly and how I view the world. And without that, like I would have probably taken long to be the person that I am. It was the whole, the fact that I was abroad for a whole year and not having contact with family, that I was able to be this man that I am today. Now you can put me anywhere, like throw me in the jungle, I'll figure my way out." – Daluxolo

[83]FE:

- "I don't wanna sound cliche and say the sky's the limit. But literally you can do anything you put your mind to. Like who knew I would be a volunteer living in another country and not crying to come back home two months later? Who knew I would be able to speak German? Who knew I

would interact with a lot of different people from different backgrounds? […] that opportunity gave me the 'you can do anything you want to do' 'you, you can be whoever you wanna be'. So now, whenever I go through or want to try something new, I always look back and say: I have nothing to lose but everything to gain from this experience, and if it doesn't work out, it's fine, I tried." – Sithandwa

[84]LV:

- "Being a Black African man who believes much in culture, in our own way of doing things […] [due to weltwärts participation] people are actually losing themselves and that is for me and has a part of unlearning […] This can be a problem if you get if you get back home […] Now you are this person who does not observe certain ways of doing things, and […] you wanna be this this different person always. But when you see certain people kinda moving away from the principle of Ubuntu, you know like just kind of be careless about certain thing, that gets you worried. Because certain things just make us to be who we are. And in us being in Europe or being in America, being in Australia being wherever, I think it's very important because no European or American or Australian loses themselves to an African or to Africanism […] that for me it becomes a serious concern" – Madala*

[85]LV:

- "I sort of like detached from you know like how I did things or how I was taught to do things. Because I wanted to fit into whatever lifestyle I was having there [in Germany]. For example, like I started like drinking in Germany and I was yo, it's not a positive" – Fundiswa

[88]FE:

- "You can put bottles in that kiosk and then you can like get a voucher […] when I was in Germany, a homeless person, if they found a beer can […] that was money for them. They could, they could survive […] That can reduce crime, reduce pollution, that can give people more independency […]" – Daluxolo
- "In Germany, I started like recognising that South Africa was not safe" – Nomlanga

[89]LV:

- "You normalise conversations around anxiety. You normalise conversations around Black tax. You, you, you, you, you normalise conversations that you know the people are not having, that a woman can become and be a fully fleshed whatever. Without this, we thought this limit that we grew up having in South Africa, that a woman cannot, cannot have it all. [...] at home they called me this rebel, right? I do what I want. I'm fierce. My mom says, ah, you know Cebisa, you don't have to tell her what to do. She's gonna tell you what she wants to do anyway. So for the longest time I I I just didn't like how they race families in South Africa. [...] A boy always doesn't have to wash dishes. [...] So when I came to Germany then that was the moment where I'm saying it's an aha moment for me, because I never saw that there is a place where women could be seen, as I was having this mindset. And when you come to Germany, I realised, well, no women are actually treated the same. You know, woman. Yeah, women also have the same rights. You know, women can treat certain things as they see. [...] I think that was like a a stamp on it to say 'Hey' your points all the time they were valid. We're just growing up in a society that has not already opened up to that." – Cebisa

[91]FE:

- "[The PoA work] taught me how to be like in and around the office space, like how to interact with um colleague in an office environment." – Enzokuhle
- "[...] making sure that I'm able to work just like how a German would work. […] I'm a beast, because of what I've seen in Germany […] I always look at it like, let me push the boundaries more because that's what you guys do essentially. You guys, you hate being comfortable, like you wanna keep pushing." – Daluxolo

[92]LV:

- "If I'm with my South African friends, I'm 100% South African. But then there's that 5%, which comes in not intentionally, but is just kicking in. Then I've got German visitors, then I'm 70:30, 30 South African, 70 German, where it's more punctuality, more understanding of what the plan, what the task, what we have to do for the rest of the day. So that's something which outside changed me to today."– Sipho

[95]FE:

- "[There is] improvement in terms of how they manage themselves, they're managing their surroundings and also partly work" – Madala*

[97]FE:

- "I learned how to make apple juice […], baking and cooking in general with the kids." – Fundiswa

[99]LV:

- "Because we are more into doing things with the hands, cutting papers, pastry, drawing [...] my skills like into computer literacy they dropped" – Ayabonga

[103]FE:

- "I was basically preoccupying my time with a lot of things that had to do with community development and my interests [...] [I] facilitated workshops for learners on school safety and then with the other program, we basically did research." - Sithandwa
- I wanted to be able to take that burden off of my mom's shoulders because she wasn't working and it was me and my brother. – Fundiswa

[104]LV:

- "The thing is when you come from a poor background. You not only, I promise you, you not you don't get only in poor financially, but mentally as well. Mentally it it does something to you to your mind because when when when I got there yeah I was I was a good coach still I had all the the the the facilitation skills […] I was enjoying the work. I don't wanna lie, I was enjoying the work that I was doing in the [PoA]. […] But the thing is, when when you come from a poor background and then you get there, you you you wanna save every cent that you earn, forgetting that you're not really getting wages. Just. It's it's a stipend, you know, it's a stipend, so it won't be enough for you to save. […] So when I got there, I wanted to save […] like, OK, I'm not gonna move. I'm gonna just stick in one place" – Nomlanga

[108]FE:

- “I’m very competitive. Like, I hate not knowing. So when I would hear this word constantly, what the hell is this word? So I'll write it down or try get the spelling, because obviously I wouldn't know what the spelling is. When I get home I YouTube it and try to understand the meaning and then, the next day I wait for someone to say that word and then I respond.” – Daluxolo

[111]LV:

- “I was becoming depressed. I wanted home, I was home sick and things like that. Like the first month, I didn't have money for food, so I had nothing in my house […] and also I had to move places, also I was staying in one flat and then I, it was just too much for me to handle. I even told [IO] I don't wanna stay here anymore. I would rather go home than stay in this place, because it's so much things happening. […] I was always very tired [...] I think that also contributed to why I was like feeling so low at that time. […] I didn't have enough sleep and it was so much on me […] that I didn't do my [German class] homework. [...] I couldn't understand stuff, [...] then I started to feel home sick. […] the depression part like I was never a person to, you know, have to be that low in life. Because like there was a time I didn't have food and I have never like been in that situation back home. Umm, the way I had to ask my mom to send me money […]. It was like times I had to eat from the kindergarten […] And you know the depression part. I was never going through that when I was back home, I was always a social person, having so much family around me and I was never alone and I felt alone when I was that way.” – Lithalethu

[116]LV:

- “It’s called radical acceptance. I think you have to know that either gonna survive or not. And I had to, you know, I had to survive eventually. […] remember I told you earlier that you know, when you live with your parents and everything, you feel protected. But here you are alone. And then you every day. It's like you. You, you, you press down, and you try to figure out how much more and normally because I think everybody knows how much pain they can take, but really that's not true. If they put another layer of pain, that's when you can realise. Ohh I didn't realise that I could actually overcome this and I think many of us don't see it up until we come out. […] You know, for example, coming all the way here to have an experience and ending up in housekeeping, I had a choice to let that really derail me or Take Me Out. But I knew that I had to survive no matter what. Right. Umm, but also you learn so much about your survival skills. You know, people could give up, but somehow, I just said, you know what, what more can I lose?” – Cebisa

[116]EV:

- “We were still young and all we we wanted to do was experience life, you know, outside South Africa. We were fragile and we we didn't know, you know, and we had to accept what came to us with might. We didn't have a voice […] It was also an experience, you know, when you um, you know when you're in a stadium and watching football and there's a lot of noise happening. People are cheering like it's too much for you, but you're in the stadium and you get used to that noise. Right? So, at some point we got used to the noise, right? We got used to, OK, this is work. […] as soon as you you accept things, doors open up” – Thando

[119]FE:

- “I had the opportunity to meet them again and their families [from a school exchange in 2014] also. Yeah, I made the family again like the parents. And I stayed at the place a few times. Umm yeah. Yeah, I was like, traveling around them.” – Lithalethu
- “We met here in South Africa. He is German he was doing an exchange also with the [youth movement]. So we met back 2016. […] he was like, I need you to do me a favor […] I'll give you money to go take a passport. But only what your next step, what you do with your passport, that will be up to you. And then I applied for the program, knowing now that I've got a passport and I've been helped by a person who would love to see me traveling abroad and I wouldn't lie he has been there for me everywhere. He made sure to check on me. I checked on him, […] there's some couple of more people, which I would say they made my stay more easy for me when I was in Germay” – Sipho

[120]FE

- “Refugees, yeah, they think I'm one and others would be like just because you Black, don't you don't you sell weed or something. You see you get those stereotypes” – Nomlanga

[122]LV:

- “The boss that I had, she was just... you know, how narrow-minded people are and people who always want to be heard. And it's either their way or the highway. Whatever you're saying is not right. She was, she was those type of people and it was so difficult working with her [...] she just made me a really ah, she demotivated me.” – Fundiswa

[123]FE:

- “I've spoke to teammates and then became friends with, with with most of the guys.And and those guys are still my friends even now […] you get people saying, hey, man, I have someone that is coming to South Africa. […] So don't you wanna connect you know? […] they’re still relevant to me, you know? And you know others, they wanna change communities in South Africa and […] they are friends and resources as well” – Nomlanga

[124]FE:

- “We [with a volunteer from the same cohort] sat to discuss, and he enlighten me in ways that I've never even questioned myself. […]” – Ayabonga
- “One particular family played a huge huge role in making things easier and making things more fun for me. Because the mom, she was just my friend. [...] She's from [Eastern Europe], but [...] lived in Germany since forever. But the way that she welcomed me and made me her younger sister was just amazing […] When I found myself lonely or I found myself missing my family, she was there. She took me on different trips and showed me different places in Germany” – Fundiswa
- “This one guy came to me and be like DUDE! DUDE, what are you doing? Why you always in your room? I'm like man, I just love my space, you know. Until he told me that you can't be in another country and not explore. Just explore. Just go crazy, dude, just go out. Just find, maybe go to a club or something. Just find new friends outside the [PoA]” – Nomlanga
- “The parents of the children, they actually were so helpful. They, you know, they get. They go an extra mile to support us if there's anything” – Ayabonga

- "Through my experiences, seeing what, for example, [name of a business contact] and [name of PoA] could do as a nonprofit organisation. I wanted to do something similar because I'd seen that it can be done"– Daluxolo
- "We [colleagues] ended up hanging out in social situations as well, which sort of helped me integrate into the community, because [afterwards] […] I was more open to, to, to meeting people, so I ended up making friends outside of my project" – Leeto

[125]FE:

- "I felt […] [the contact person in the IO] had this defense mechanism tools to say like yeah you know German people they are not so used to these, they are not so exposed to this. […] I didn't have the secure platform to address such issues, like because I know they're they're responding like, yeah, you know, they are not so used to this. You know, the village people, the old people, they're… That's not what I'm looking for when I come and address that. So I need someone […] who's also gonna say: Yeah, I see your problem. What can we do like at the end of the day? we're gonna say, how would you wish that to go? I mean, we cannot change the entire village, but I could at least have the people who wanna listen and see how I'm going through in that period of time" – Ayabonga

[126]FE:

- "I think you have to know that either gonna survive or not. And I had to, you know, I had to survive eventually. That was that was just the whole point. Umm, but really, are those challenges necessary?" – Cebisa
- "With the first family that I lived […] I was home alone most of the time […] I tried to just accept the situation cause you also, you're invited into someone's home. You don't want to make them feel any, you know, you don't want them to feel unappreciated. Cause one, they're opening up their home to a stranger, so you can't really expect them to adjust their whole lives just to accommodate you and your needs all the time […] [through that] I also became more independent and got used to spending time alone by myself, enjoying my own company" – Sithandwa
- "So experience will teach you to grow up, especially if you travel far, far from your family and your friends right there. And then we did not have any choice but to grow up and and, you know, accept and deal with it and move on. And so yeah, there was little time for us to sulk and you know, feel bad or disappointed about the experience we just had to grow up" – Thando

[127]FE:

- "I really only started being independent when I was in Germany. I I was always under my parents shadow before that." – Noxolo
- "It's such a huge difference from when you having your family as like your family and your community as like your safety structure as opposed to when you alone in a country and you have to fend for yourself" – Alinda*

[128]LV:

- "I'm queer, as I I identify and you know, even though South Africa is quite a liberal country, […] but I grew up in a Muslim family. And so for me I grew up with a lot of oppression within my own, you know, safe space which is supposed to be my family. And so my first experience of freedom, was not just being able to walk in the fields, but also being able to be myself, was actually being in Germany. Because I didn't feel there were any eyes on me to truly criticise me in a way that would hurt, because none of those people were around, you know. […] And so I found, I found myself

being more open to making social connections, cause I was quite guarded back home, cause I was too afraid of what people would think of me and would find out. Because I grew up in a very, very small town, so, you know, having [religious] parents with eyes on you and being disapproving of anything queer […] I didn't know there was another thing." – Leeto

[130]FE:

- "When you spend so much time in a different place, you tend to just I don't know, go full force and live how they live" – Fundiswa
- "It's very important for us to, no matter what, no matter who we'll become, but that we'll still remain grounded to our Africanism and us being Africans. And I'm seeing people learn and unlearning certain values and ways of doing things." – Madala*
- "In Germany you have to be on time, you know, so those things you that's that discipline that you also learn." – Lithalethu
- "When facilitating. I don't like it when you have like too much rules. That's another thing that I've learned in Germany: there's too much rules, too much rules, you see. But I had to adjust. I had to adjust. I had to learn and and and obey to the rules" – Nomlanga
- "When you come to Germany, I realised, well, no women are actually treated the same. [...] Women also have the same rights. […] that was like a a stamp on it to say 'hey your points all the time they were valid'. We're just growing up in a society that has not already opened themselves up to that." – Cebsia
- "You don't throw away your can after drinking your cold drink, because it it's money and you people go to work. People go, yeah. Like you value your things like you look after them. You're recycling like like you you you make sure you look after your bike." – Ayabonga
- "I wasn't always necessarily expected to talk German, but people very seldomly spoke English. So if I wanted to be included in social situations, I have to understand German so I could respond to participate" – Leeto
- "Without the language you cannot work […] let's align the language thing because that's how people survive" – Cebisa

[131]LV:

- "I sort of like detached from whatever teachings and whatever values my mom just put out there for me to grab and I sort of like forgot about them. And now that I think about it, it's like, oh, oh, no, that was not a good idea. But then, I don't really regret that because then, the experience was the for me to experience. And if I, I feel like if I had just stopped myself from, you know, going out there exploring, then it it wouldn't have been the same. I mean, you only get to, to go to another country - like that for like once in your life. And then the next you just, you try to explore on your own. I think creating that foundation for me was very important." – Fundiswa

[133]FE:

- "People stare a lot. I wasn't even sure why they were staring, but I took that and accepted it in a good way, because […] maybe some people have never seen a Black girl. So I just laughed at it, because I felt like if I just took it to hard, then it would take away my experience and that wasn't OK. So I didn't really experience a lot of racism. I think it was more of ohh, you're from South Africa, I want to get to know you, but I don't know how to do that. And the funny thing is, a lot of people who actually extend a helping hand were older people in Germany […] I think they were

more interested in me and where I come from and wanted to know more. Other than that, I didn't really experience any tragic racism or any bad people." – Fundiswa

- "One thing that stood out for me is the fact that I didn't experience racism in Germany. […] I thought because I'm I'm going into a country where the majority are White people, I'm obviously gonna experience it, but I didn't. I didn't. Not not not to the extent to which I've experienced it in South Africa. [There] it's just in your face every day, somebody's gonna look at you some way, say something and all of that. In Germany, everybody minded their own business." – Noxolo

[134]LV:

- "I was really, really home at my place of assignment and the teachers or the educators and my boss made it very welcoming, as well as the parents. Outside of the kindergarten like they they took me like their own. Like they would come up and be like, yo, how you doing? It's your first week, 'how you feeling?'. They will try to speak English if they couldn't and I'd be like 'oh, wir können Deutsch sprechen' [English for: "we can also speak German"] [...] I had a very good bond with the parents and the kids and my coworkers. […] to this day, like when I arrive, they do like welcoming party." – Daluxolo

[137]FE:

- "There were times where I was feeling so lonely because I was so isolated [staying] in a little village […] sort of removed from like the main city centre and all of that, so that I wasn't really surrounded by hustle and bustle, […] you don't often meet people, you know, it's just the village where mostly older people lived. So your neighbours weren't really friendly, but I just remember being able to go for walks out in the field, you know, all by myself in the middle of the night […] that sense of freedom, you know, that was quite moving." – Musiegh
- "I don't think […] there's a lot of Black people in the in the in that area. So I just like you know, subtly got racism, racsim, but not […] that bad way [that] I couldn't face it. […] I was just like, nobody When some schoolchildren were just saying Black and I'd just look at them and just, you know, mind my business […], but that didn't impact me, [city], which is a very small village and people are really like rural rural there. So […] people would stare at you" – Lithalethu

[138]LV:

- "It was great for for the experience, you know, to meet a lot of people and so busy and, you know, the work life, student life, you know, you, you'd see different people, different faces every time. So it wasn't really secluded. […] So the city was great. I enjoyed it so much. It was so many sightseeing that you can do, you didn't need to travel right? You could just stay inside the city and and you know, go from area to area inside […] I used to live in an Wohnheim [eng.: student resident] with a lot of students there and which made me feel part, you know, of the whole cultural exchange programme thing because they were they came from other nationalities, right. They were Indians. They were Pakistanis. They were Vietnamese, Asians, Africans as well, so I felt part of them. So there was a good part that [IO] at least, would you know, accommodate us with with people that are from different nationalities. Right? So so it's to feel that we're not the only ones that are not from Germany." – Thando

[139]LV:

- „Living there let in a tiny bit of anxiety and depression, because there's just gar nichts weißt du, there's absolutely nothing that you can do outside of that you go to work, you come back home.

And of course, your entertainment would then be to watch Netflix or whatever, but then eventually, then you can actually detect how depressing that you know your life is now becoming […] but also another thing is I can't. I come from Pretoria where the city is constantly full. There is always movements, you know […] but in Germany] it's a village, right? And there's only probably three people here. There's only probably three people who are young people, but they're also come from, not like there. So I gain it's still, you know I'm I'm African and and and nobody understands what's happening. It's a really tiny village. It's like a normal village that you would expect in Germany. I mean, of course. And that's not some, but somebody would want to hear. But the reality is that that's what you you you find when you go to small villages and you're the only brown person and stuff like that. So there's nothing much you can do except I think there was another neighboring place town called. I think it's our wish or something like that, that was like 30 minutes away […] Umm, the I didn't connect with so many people because I was in a tiny village" – Cebisa

[140]FE:

- "They [the PoA team] listened to me and things started to get better, which I really liked, and I could do activities that […] I created also to do with the kids. So they, there was an open space for me to implement" – Lithalethu
- "I'm here to share whatever skills that I have and I'm here to, to share whatever culture that I have with you [referring to German PoA] guys. So if you are going to come in with the mentality that says no, this is how we do things here, so this is how you're gonna do things and not allow me to share what I've been told to share, it doesn't make sense." – Fundiswa

[141]LV:

- "We would basically do general work right. And I'm saying general work because it felt more of working than volunteering. And this is like the most important part of my feedback about the project. […] We were supposed to be there to impact, […] inform them about South Africa, right? We were supposed to do community service. We were supposed to do intercultural exchange. But no, but that programmeintroduced us to the work life of Germany. […] You were not a volunteer, right? You are a worker, […] There would be no room for us to even put-up suggestions to our employer, right? At times I would try and inform them that, hey, […] we're here to make an impact and to do community service in intercultural exchange, this is the program. And they would tell us no, […] They [the IO] would inform us that part of the the agreement for the project was for us to do what we were doing." – Thando

[144]FE:

- "What became then another saving moments for me where the seminars, so the seminars, where I would meet with the rest of the other of the same group that I was with because remember we're one group and then we are like distributed across the country and the cities and so when we come together, we realise again our stories are similar. Nobody understands us, you know, but we understand each other. So it was more like a moment but would unpack what we were going through. We would unpack our our difficulties and somehow when we we we we were relaying those difficulties to the others, they understood" –Cebisa
- "I lived with two families when I was there, […] [the first were] busy people, like I was home alone most of the time […]. It wasn't like my other family, the one I'm still in touch with. We, we'd go on road trips together, we'd go bowling. We were like a proper family" – Sithandwa

- "Definitely, we appreciate like the mentors which you guys have for South North Volunteers, but if maybe you could […] involve like former South North volunteers into mentoring […] that is one of the major things. If maybe they can have someone you know, who can they relate to them because at times like it's not so easy" – Ayabonga

[146]FE:

- "I was more reserved when it came to certain new opportunities and grabbing everything. But now […] I can do this more motivating myself. […] [or] taking a stand. If I see that something is not working out for me, or if I see that I'm not in a position that is very comfortable, then I speak out and allow […] to create a place where, a safe space for me to be myself" – Fundiswa
- "You feel like an alien in your own country. Let me just put it like because you've been exposed to a lot of things, you know. Now your your mindset has changed." – Nomalanga
- "I became a new person. I I became a new person a lot here. I matured a lot. Is that I I couldn't relate to my age mates anymore" – Noxolo
- "I had a lot more of a holistic lifestyle [in Germany], [...] the society allowed for that, you know, the safe community allowed me to cycle, to work and back. Coming back, [...] I'm back into more of an isolated routine" – Leeto
- "I think also in my social life as well, I've I've lost a lot of friends and I have been disregarded by a lot of family members. And for me, I think you know everything is a blessing in disguise. And you, you walk your path a certain way and if some people are not allowed to be with you during that journey, then so be it. I think, me knowing, you know, these are the type of people that I want to surround me during certain situation, plays a huge part of my life" – Fundiswa

[147]LV:

- "For the rest of the year or two years that we've been back, we had nothing, right. So, it it, there was no contingency plan." – Thando

[149]FE:

- "When I got back, I had to finish the research component of my masters […] And I I think going on, the volunteers service going on the weltwärts programme. I think it made me a bit more confident to pursue things that really mattered to me. And so, you know, I felt this huge sense of obligation towards my job and my employer that I was working for Like I said, they gave me that unpaid leave [during weltwärts]. But I just decided to resign from that job and follow opportunities that, you know, better served me." – Leeto
- "When I came back, I just completely transformed [NGO] and I'm making money from it to this day. Like I'm able to sustain myself. I am able to travel. Um, I'm able to converse, you know, network with people. […] There's a huge German community, […] [where] I'm able to integrate myself, you know, obviously with them being surprised, you know, there's a Black person, he speaks German, whatever. I use that to my advantage. And they see that, OK, no, I'm part of their community, so I get other opportunities there. […] there were colleagues, that came back, and their life isn't what they would want it to be or destined to be. But I took it and ran with it. Like some people are even shocked that I still have connections in Germany. I still go to Germany. I'm like, but bro, like you could have done it too. You clearly took a different route." – Bliss
- "From meeting [person] there [in Germany], [she] is not only helping me by giving me a job, but she's helping the organisation that they came with is helping the entire community." – Nomlanga

[150]LV:

- "I think it's like a hot-potato-dropping-type of situation. We give you experience. What you do with it is up to you […]. No one prepares you for that, nobody prepares you for the culture shock when you come back home. […] And I think a lot of [weltwärts'] Germans also say that when they go there, you know, they they appreciate life more, they enjoy life more when they come back home and the culture shock, everybody's chasing money. So for me, the other way around and when I went back, I knew there was just something was just not lining up anymore. And so for the whole year, I think I was just like really heavily depressed. But then I got an opportunity to work with, [weltwärts stakeholders] […]. And so that helped me in a way. But working in that reminded me that I really have to go back. I really am learning so much. When I'm in Germany, I am finding myself. I think it's a space for myself" – Cebisa

[151]FE:

- "People that I've met through the Southern Alumni Network [that] former volunteers, basically we developed. And it's a support structure for us as former volunteers that are in Southern Africa. Also, I'm a part of a group of the […] Global South former volunteers. So, it's not just Southern Africa, but all volunteers from the Global South and basically, we provide support for like each other and share opportunities with one another. […] And if it wasn't for me being part of the weltwärts program, I wouldn't have gotten those opportunities […] I still do have the opportunity to go to work and study at the [PoA] should I ever want to do that. Because they actually wanted me to extend my stay and study there, because they thought I was a perfect fit for their organisation […] I had a great boss and she still, we are still in contact even today. So I feel like yes, there are still opportunities. I mean, even through weltwärts, there's a lot of things that we're doing, I mean with [IO], with the Southern African Alumni Network. There's a lot of activities that we did after the volunteering programme[…]. I even did a project with [quality organisation] [where] we did trainings for former volunteers on project management facilitation. […] giving them a platform to share their own experiences from the programmeand give an update and see how we can work together as former volunteers, to move forward to ensure that we try to give access to other people to this opportunity." – Sithandwa
- "Maybe the places of assignment, if they could be aligned to the skills, maybe the interest of the volunteer […] that could be [more] fruitful […] cause when I got back here, I was no longer having kids that young" – Ayabonga

[152]LV:

- "[The IO] or weltwärts does not really give you life after that or does not give you opportunities, enough opportunities. You know, like you come back home and […] you're out of place. You come back home and you don't fit in anymore. And you just have to find your way again. Like you know, you start over, you apply for school or you you look for a job, right? They they don't say hey, since now you're back there's something else we want you to do here. We we have something for you. I'm not saying that they should, but you know, suggest a few things like: Hey, you might wanna look at this, it's a programmeor it's […] job opportunities. There is a huge part that one needs to play for themselves, right when you come back […] There's no babysitting, but at least there should be some guidance like there should be like a program. […] A lot of things started happening just right after us […] So there was something called the Southern African Alumni network [which] gives opportunities for volunteers, you know, in Africa. [...] But we could have used that much,

much earlier because for the for the rest of the year or two years that we've been back, we had nothing, right. So, it it there was no contingency plan." – Thando

[154]LV:

- "There's a lot of pressure from your family and friends. They were like, why don't you stay in Germany if you're gonna be staying without a job? Now, why don't you stay there if you're not gonna be studying now? [...] That pressure, like you become a nobody, but you were somebody when you were in Germany, which shouldn't be the case because when you come back you you should still be somebody that would come back with an impact. I mean, I've got something to share, right? I've got news. […] I can speak German and you know I can, I'll tell you about the country. […] all those things should become the things that people would see from you or hear from you rather than the criticism of being unemployed or being careless" – Thando

[155]LV:

- "People expect you that you come from a first world country, you have money. [...] That's the stereotype in in the Township. So, you get back and then [...] you are broke. Your family as well is putting pressure on you. Not not that they they they wanna put pressure but they had an impression that yo you went overseas, you're gonna come back and help the the the they family [...] but I'm broke. And then it it makes things difficult because even the community, the way that they see you is different now" – Nomlanga