



Unraveling Narratives

**A discussion and reflection
deck towards transformation**

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*a value product of Hjalte Andersen,
Roy Nieuwveld and Naemi Hölzlsauer*

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at Windesheim Honour College*

Intro

To each of you who are brave enough to start a journey of reflection,

Welcome! You're about to start an honest and thoughtful conversation about difficult topics and concepts that you might or might not be familiar with. The cards will facilitate difficult dialogues that we believe need to be held in public. Only then will the structures that govern our day-to-day interactions, structures that regrettably have allowed racist stereotypes to settle into our way of life, be capable of undergoing sustainable, lasting change. Our goal has been to open the discussion by disclosing our prejudices and by identifying, together, pain points in our system. We see an opportunity to create value when we examine our biases and connect as equals and humans. We applaud you for the courage you're about to show in actively changing your biases, so let us show you the roadmap to meaningful conversations first.

- **Step 1: Create a token for speech**

Assign an object to be a token for speech. The person in possession of the token is allowed to speak or make their point.

- **Step 2: Read up**

The conversation we will have is to be divided into 4 different categories. 1. Development and Globalization 2. Ethics and engagement 3. Self-reflection and Intent 4. Impact and Change. Each category aims to reflect on various sides of life which are reinforcing racist and 'saviorism' structures, according to research. Think critically about the education you have had, and the experiences you had and try forming a thought-out answer to the conversation.

- **Step 3: Having the conversation**

Before the start of the dialogue, one participant reads the question or statement aloud. After, take a minute to think. What are my biases? What do I know? Let everyone read the card if you think this helps the process.

- **Step 4: Active Listening and Reflection**

After each participant shares their perspective, it is crucial to practice active listening. Give each person your full attention, seeking to understand their viewpoint without interrupting or formulating counterarguments immediately. Take the time to reflect on their words, considering how their insights contribute to the conversation and challenge your understanding. You are welcome to challenge responses in any way, but we ask that you respect these opinions and refrain from passing judgment.

- **Step 5: Seek Common Ground and Shared Goals**

Identify commonalities and shared goals within the conversation. Despite diverse viewpoints, there may be areas of agreement or common objectives that can serve as a foundation for collaborative action. By focusing on these shared values, participants can work together towards meaningful change and dismantling racist and 'saviourism' structures.

- **Optional Step 6: Reflection and Evaluation**

After the conversation and identifying actions, take the time to reflect and evaluate the process. Consider the impact of the dialogue on participants' perspectives, behaviours, and relationships. Assess the effectiveness of the steps and name areas for improvement or refinement in future conversations on related topics. We recommend bringing a pen and paper at the start for any notes you would like to make.

Background

In the past decades, international development has become a fast-growing industry, including a complex interconnectedness and interdependency between non-profit and for-profit organizations, international donors from across the globe, enormous governmental funds and development aid, international volunteers, and organizations offering volunteer projects to support local communities in the Global South, has generated a revenue of \$84.7 billion. Little attention is dedicated to concerns regarding possible negative impacts resulting from development work. Voluntourism (volunteer tourism) often perpetuates White Saviorism, the problematic narrative that reinforces the idea that white people are needed to "save" or help people in the Global South. This narrative is damaging because it reinforces harmful power dynamics of a strong and skillful Global North and a poor and helpless Global South that ultimately benefit the volunteers and not the communities they are supposed to serve. Often stereotypes are used for the marketization of development projects. Engaging in projects without understanding the power dynamics at play can mean that the volunteer adds harm to a local community without the intention or knowledge thereof. When addressing white people about the topic on white saviourism, colonialism and the debate on race and racism, many will start to feel offended and start to defend themselves. This behaviour is described with the term white fragility. White fragility is linked to a lack of regular engagements in conversation about these topics mentioned above. So if you come across a discussion question or a statement that creates discomfort or makes you defend yourself, take a moment to think about if this could be due to white fragility.

Several impactful milestones shaped human history in the past. The period of colonialism is just one of the chapters discussed in the school setting of our Western Society. Colonisation is described as the act of extending borders, where a “superior” civilization uses an area and its resources to increase its own power. Colonizers sustained their actions with reasons such as legal and religious obligation to bring civilization to these barbaric and savage nations. Although most colonized countries are “independent” by now, a decolonization of the economic systems never occurred. Instead, it continued under the pretence of what is known as the modernization theory, where a so-called “developed” country, by coming into contact, could help transform the economy of an “underdeveloped” country, essentially moving from an agricultural society to an industrialized one.

Colonialism created a racial hierarchy where some countries are seen as “developed” and other as “undeveloped”. During colonialism colonisers used terminologies like animals or barbarians to address the natives, today we refer to ethnicity or traditional society. This classification still exudes superiority over the other.

There are organisations and individuals in developed countries that wish to make reparations, which can be considered noble and good on its own. This can be due to either guilt of the colonial history or the current distortion between the regions. However, the postcolonial mindset and categorisation of developed and underdeveloped countries, which builds on the modernisation theory, has left the feeling of superiority intact among actors from developed countries. This brings us to one of the main aspects of this reflective card set – the White Saviour. The desire to “change and help the countries classified as underdeveloped”, goes hand in hand with the White Saviour Complex. The complex can be described as the perception that only a white person from a highly developed country has the tools, knowledge, and abilities to save “the others”, referring to anyone non-white living in the countries classified as “underdeveloped” or “developing”

The White Saviour may act with the best intentions and motives, however, the white saviour narrative hinders progress in multiple ways. According to research, this Western attitude prevents individuals from developing the skills necessary for sustainable development. These competencies include system orientation, future orientation, personal commitment, or action-taking for sustainable development.

In conclusion, to promote sustainable development, we must dismantle the White Savior narrative, confront power dynamics, and foster equitable partnerships. Prioritizing local empowerment and respecting diverse knowledge and cultures is essential. By challenging notions of superiority, we can achieve meaningful and transformative change. Let's work towards inclusive international development driven by solidarity and mutual respect.

Development and Globalization

The UN categorizes countries as developing or developed.

What does it mean that a country is “developing”?

Is there only one type of development?

Could we view all countries as developing?

Ethics and Engagement

The following statement came from an activist in Uganda, when discussing volunteer tourism projects aimed at the Global South:

“Why do you need to come to us? Help yourself.”

Reflect on how this statement affects you. How does it make you feel?

What do you think could motivate this statement?



Impact and Change

Imagine that you have the task of making a change in the power dynamic between the Global North and Global South.

What would you change?

Where should this change happen?

How would you make the change?



Self-reflection and Intent

England, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, and France were among the biggest colonial powers. In total, over 15 million people were victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Intergenerational trauma refers to oppressive or traumatic effects of historical events, that are passed down from generation to generation. How do you think intergenerational trauma impacts international relations?

Development and Globalization

Reflection/discussion:

When you hear the term “Global South”, what do you picture?

What do you think created that picture?

Ethics and Engagement

The following question came from an activist in Kenya, when discussing volunteer tourism projects aimed at the Global South:

“What are your motives to help? Do you want to feel better about yourself? And why do you not start helping locally in your own neighborhood/country?”

Reflect on how this statement affects you. How does it make you feel?
What do you think motivates people to engage in volunteer tourism projects in the Global South?

Impact and Change

The following question came from an educator in The Netherlands when discussing international development aid:

“What does it mean to give aid on one hand, but at the same time take away so much?”

What do you understand from this question?

What do you think is being taken away?



Self-reflection and Intent

Volunteer tourism (or voluntourism) is a popular way for people who want to travel and give back to a local community.

What motivates people to engage in voluntourism projects?

What are potential harms that can arise from these projects?

Development and Globalization

International development refers to programs aimed at developing countries to bring progress in various fields such as education, infrastructure, governance, and poverty reduction.

What could be the issue with international development?
Is international development important? Why (not)?

Ethics and Engagement

Reflection/discussion:

Identify ethical requirements when engaging with other cultures.

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Impact and Change

Reflect on the motivations and intentions one can have to make changes in the world.

Are they pure intentions?

Could there be hidden motives? What are they?



Self-reflection and Intent

Reflection/discussion:

What competencies do you think are important to develop before traveling?

What competencies are built when traveling abroad?

Development and Globalization

International development refers to programs aimed at developing countries to bring progress in various fields such as education, infrastructure, governance, and poverty reduction.

To what extent does international development perpetuate colonial dynamics and power imbalance?

What kind of biases do you think there are in international development?

Reflect on how these biases could affect the work.

Ethics and Engagement

Reflection/discussion:

Who do you think could benefit from keeping the status quo in global power dynamics?

Do you benefit from these power dynamics?



Impact and Change

The following statement came from an educator in The Netherlands when discussing power systems of global society:

“The knowledge is there. We simply lack the will”.

What do you think of this statement?



Self-reflection and Intent

Reflection/discussion:

Reflect on what steps you can take to diversify the lens that you see the world through.

Development and Globalization

Reflection/discussion:

To what extent do you think colonial power structures still influence global society?

Discuss social, political, and economic dimensions of global society.

Ethics and Engagement

Reflect on your knowledge of colonialism.

Did you learn about it in school?

Is your education on colonialism sufficient?



Impact and Change

“Change needs to be pleasurable, easy, profitable and practical. If all of them are given, people will change. If one is lacking, change will not be achieved in the long-term”.

What do you think of this statement?
Do you think this is true? Why/not?



Self-reflection and Intent

International development refers to programs aimed at developing countries to bring progress in various fields such as education, infrastructure, governance, and poverty reduction.

The following statement came from an educator in The Netherlands when discussing international development projects:

“Maybe the way we understand and give help is not the best way for others”.

Reflect on how this statement affects you. *How does it make you feel?*

Development and Globalization

Reflection/discussion:

How can media perpetuate the white saviour narrative?

Ethics and Engagement

International development refers to programs aimed at developing countries to bring progress in various fields such as education, infrastructure, governance, and poverty reduction.

In international development, do you think there are unheard voices?

Who do these voices belong to?

How can we include unheard voices?



Impact and Change

The following statement came from an activist in Kenya when discussing international development:

“It is time for civil society organizations from the Global North to hand over all work to locals”.

Reflect on this statement. Why should the work be handed over to people in the Global South?

Do you think international development is a profitable industry? Who do you think profits?



Self-reflection and Intent

International development refers to programs aimed at developing countries to bring progress in various fields such as education, infrastructure, governance, and poverty reduction.

The following statement came from an educator in The Netherlands when discussing international development projects:

“Is it not enough to have global awareness?”

Reflect on how this statement affects you. How does it make you feel?

What do you think could motivate this statement?



Impact and Change

Reflect on biases that you may have on race, developing countries, and the Global South.

Where do these biases come from?

What impact do these biases have on your life and the life of others?

Ethics and Engagement

Reflect on the education that you receive.

How would you value that education?

Is the education you receive the education that you need?

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Impact and Change

What does it mean to be educated?

Reflect on how you view people who don't receive the same education as you.

How do you view them? Why?



Self-reflection and Intent

If the world was to collapse tomorrow, what kind of education would help you survive?

Who has the relevant knowledge to survive?

How does this make you feel?

**We hope you had a challenging yet
insightful time reflecting and discussing!**

