Postcolonial tendencies in Swedish development aid
A discourse analysis of the membership magazine of Läkarmissionen

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE ................................................................................................................................. 2

INTRODUCTION ...................................................................................................................... 3
Background .............................................................................................................................. 3
Aim and research question .................................................................................................... 4
Previous research and contribution to the field ................................................................. 5
Delimitations ......................................................................................................................... 6
What is Läkarmissionen? ..................................................................................................... 6
Outline .................................................................................................................................. 7

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ................................................................................................ 8
Postcolonial theory .................................................................................................................. 8
Postcolonialism and development ....................................................................................... 10

METHOD AND MATERIAL ..................................................................................................... 12
Material .................................................................................................................................. 12
Method: Discourse analysis ................................................................................................ 13
Analytical tools ..................................................................................................................... 14
Limitations with the method ............................................................................................... 15
Positionality and reflexivity ............................................................................................... 16

ANALYSIS .................................................................................................................................. 17
Passive or active, dependent or contributing? .................................................................... 17
\hspace{1em} Articles about Africa .............................................................................................. 17
\hspace{1em} Articles about Central and South America ............................................................ 20
Modern or traditional, rational or irrational and democracy or disrespect for human rights? \hspace{1em} Articles about Africa .............................................................................................. 22
\hspace{1em} Articles about Central and South America ............................................................ 24
Comparing the representations of Africa and South and Central America ...................... 26

DISCUSSION ............................................................................................................................ 28

CONCLUDING REMARKS ...................................................................................................... 30

BIBLIOGRAPHY ....................................................................................................................... 31
Printed sources ....................................................................................................................... 31
Online sources ....................................................................................................................... 32
Material .................................................................................................................................. 32
PREFACE

I wish to express special thanks to my supervisor, Maria Eriksson Baaz, for devoting time to bring clarity and guiding me throughout the process. I also want to direct my gratitude to family members for supporting me and taking time to proofread, and my friends for all the encouragement I have received during the process.
INTRODUCTION

Background

News articles about children suffering from malnutrition and decease often, for many of us, result in both bad conscience for being fortunate in life and fosters a wish to make a difference for those most in need. When people are deprived of basic human rights we want to do what we can to contribute to changing these conditions. The World Bank made an estimation that approximately 1 out of 10 people in the world lived under 1,90 USD a day in 2013 (World Bank, 2018). One billion adults cannot read and write and the same amount of people do not have access to clean drinking water. Such statistics of extreme poverty stir up compassion in many rich countries in the West, as elsewhere, motivating actions against poverty, starvation and poor living conditions (Easterly, 2006: 8).

Yet, as postcolonial development perspectives have demonstrated, development efforts to alleviate poverty and suffering have been shaped by colonial history and its aftermaths. For example, Crewe and Harrison explain how Western stereotypes of other cultures as corrupt, uneducated and primitive still remain within development agencies. The non-Western communities receiving Western aid are often considered to be the problem. To name a few examples, African men are often described as irresponsible and corrupted, Indian people have been described within development agencies as deceitful and unable to manage finances (Crewe & Harrison, 1999:30). Hence, the discourses that remain from the colonial era have shaped the Western idea of responsibility towards the former colonized regions and how the ‘developing world’ is perceived. The desire to help can sometimes be shaded by an attitude of preeminence in regards to those who are provided Western services. While these images have been reoccurring in discourses regarding all colonized regions of the world, Africa has often been placed at the lowest level of the evolutionary hierarchy, reminding the Western world how far they have come and how much they have progressed (Eriksson Baaz, 2001: 8). Loomba calls this a ‘cultural hierarchy’ placing the white Europe at the top and the black Africa at the bottom (Loomba, 2005: 154), with other former colonized societies in between. Hence while all colonized were described as primitive in relation to the West, they were placed at different scales on the evolutionary ladder.
The development industry is no longer uncontested and development discourses and practices are often criticized and questioned for reproducing colonial representations. Many scholars argue that we have come far in breaking down these patterns and power structures remaining in our society today (McEwan, 2001:105). But how far have we actually come?

Research has been conducted on how aid organizations reproduce this postcolonial discourse today, yet, only a few analyzed Swedish organizations. Among these are a few bachelor theses discussed in the section on previous research, as well as work by Maria Eriksson Baaz (Eriksson Baaz, 2005). Moreover, most research focus on representations in relation to a specific country or region and there is, to my knowledge, no research that analyses if traces of the evolutionary ladder – that is varying descriptions of various regions in the South – can still be found in contemporary development discourse. This study seeks to do so, focusing on the Swedish development NGO, namely Läkarmissionen.

Läkarmissionen is an interesting case as it has not yet been the focus for any study in the light of postcolonialism. Moreover, it produces its own journal thus providing material outside of website texts often used in similar studies. The magazine is the primary means through which the organization communicates with its donors and can thus be considered to represent the values of the organization. Additionally, as the organization cooperates with a variety of projects on different continents it has widespread coverage and thus an analysis of differences between these regions can be made.

**Aim and Research questions**

Drawing on postcolonialism, this study will examine the discourses of Läkarmissionen to investigate whether traces and tendencies of colonial portrayals of non-Western people still remain within the organization. It seeks to contribute to the field of postcolonial, and more particularly postcolonial development studies. This will be done through a discourse analysis of the magazine *Svenska Journalen* published by the organization six times per year.

An additional aim of the study is to explore whether Africans are still placed at the bottom of the evolutionary hierarchy in comparison to other colonized regions as they have been historically. For this purpose, a comparison will be made regarding the portrayal of African people and the
portrayal of people from Central and South America. The aim of the thesis can be broken down into the following more specific research questions:

- How does Läkarmissionen present Western people, in relation to the people in the receiving country, in their development projects and are there traces of colonial representations in the accounts?
- Is there a difference between how people in the receiving countries in Africa and Central and South America are portrayed in terms of colonial representations?

Previous research and contribution to the field
The general ideas of the main theoretical framework of this thesis, postcolonialism, can be found under the section Theoretical frameworks, including a more specific presentation of the field of colonialism and postcolonial development can also be found. In this section I will therefore mainly account for more empirical research that analyzes specific development actors/organizations from a postcolonial perspective. Guido Veronese, Marco Prati and Marco Castiglioni has, through analyses of documents and interviews, conducted research on postcolonial perspectives in aid systems in both Uganda and Palestine, yet no comparison was made between the two countries (Vernese, Prati & Castiglioni, 2011). Another example is Emma Crew and Priyanthi Fernando’s study on how racism influences relationships within the development industry and emphasizes the need for a decentralization of power to the South. They have conducted the analysis by looking at development agencies in Africa, Latin America and Asia (Crewe & Fernandos, 2006).

In a Swedish context, other similar studies on development organizations have been conducted mainly by students. One example of such studies is a bachelor thesis by Moa Ederyd which compares a non-profit and for-profit organization, Church of Sweden and Volontärresor, to investigate whether there is a link between the marketization of aid and upholding postcolonial stereotypes of the ‘White helper’ (Ederyd, 2017). Another study by Hanna Lundgren is exploring the organization Plan of Sweden to study traces of ‘the Girl effect’ and construction of masculinity and femininity in their project descriptions (Lundgren, 2017). However, research is yet to be conducted on how formalized colonized regions are described as more or less developed than others.
Joanne Sharp and John Briggs argue that what is needed for the development field today is an increased understanding of the history behind the power relations and the influence of the postcolonial discourse to increase the efficiency of the development industry (Sharp & Briggs, 2016: 8). This is what this study seeks to do. Not only does this study contribute to the postcolonial field by investigating a new organization which has not yet been studied in the light of postcolonial theory, but also by exploring whether different continents are still placed at different levels on the evolutionary hierarchy in the development industry today. To the authors knowledge, this has not previously been done.

**Delimitations**

The study is limited since only one organization is to be investigated and the findings can therefore not be generalized and applied to other development aid organizations, investigating more organizations would have increased the generalizability of the study, but the quality of the analysis would have lacked due to limited time and resources. Instead the thesis can, together with other studies, contribute to a deeper understanding of the problem at hand.

Further, a second delimitation concerns the choice of continents to be analyzed. Naturally, it would have been interesting to investigate all the articles about the projects to which Läkarmissionen contributes. Yet, the study has been limited to Africa and South and Central America to ensure that the quality of the analysis can be upheld. As stated above, one of the main aims of the study is to investigate whether Africans are still placed lower on the evolutionary hierarchy compared to South and Central America.

Another important delimitation of the study is the timeframe. The aim of the thesis has not been to investigate how the discourses has changed during the years and how postcolonial studies have shaped how Western organizations present the locals. As the thesis is concerned with how the receiving communities are presented today, the study was limited to representations made by Läkarmissionen during the year 2017.

**What is Läkarmissionen?**

Läkarmissionen is a Swedish aid organization which aims at deal with issues of poverty, human rights and underdevelopment. The organization was founded in 1958 and is currently contributing
to development projects in four continents. It is involved with a wide range of projects; both humanitarian aid, education and social care with the aim to increase opportunities for the recipients in the collaborating country so that they themselves can improve their living conditions (Läkarmissionen, 2018a). On the website it reads:

“After having participated in one of Läkarmissionen’s projects, the participants should have better prospects in life and abilities to take care of themselves. It is we, or our partners, who are doing the job, but the individual who, with the right support, improves his or her life.” (Läkarmissionen, 2018b)

The stated priority of the organization is to provide capabilities for the locals to create the life they want for themselves and build the society they wish to have. On their website it is emphasized how some states are unable to respect the integrity and human rights of their population, resulting in them being deprived of their freedom and control. As this leads to increased vulnerability, the goal set out by Läkarmissionen is not only to provide the local partners with the expertise they need to effectively combat these problems, but also to serve as examples to follow (Läkarmissionen, 2018b). The vision is expressed as follows:

“We shall, through developing and efficient methods, support the will and capabilities of exposed people to change their living conditions.” (Läkarmissionen, 2018b)

Instead of initiating projects themselves, the organization contributes to projects and organizations already operating in these countries. This is expressed to be both time and cost efficient in task to work for development (Läkarmissionen, 2018c).

Outline
The outline of the thesis will be structured as follows; First, one section will be dedicated to the theoretical framework which this study builds on. The history of the postcolonial field and its relevance to this research will be presented along with its connections to development studies. After this I will present the methodology and material used in the study, including a methodological discussion of discourse analysis and implications for the study. This is followed by the analysis, which is divided into three parts, and last a presentation of the conclusions drawn from the findings and a discussion on the same.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: POSTCOLONIALISM

This section is concerned with a presentation of the theoretical framework of the thesis. The ideas behind colonialism and postcolonial theory are first described followed by its connections to the development research.

Postcolonial theory

One definition of the concept of colonialism is the control over someone else’s land and possessions (Loomba, 2005:18). However, in contrast to earlier forms of colonialism, European colonialism was also characterized by a reconstruction of the economic structure of the colonized regions. These projects where implemented by the use of a variety of different methods where some regions were completely overrun by the Western ideas, while the approach to other regions were simpler and rather passive (Loomba, 2005: 18-19).

Postcolonial thinkers point out that the process was truly global and has had an impact on our world today (Hall, 1995: 246). Eriksson Baaz describes colonialism as “a global process that, in different ways, has marked most societies”. Another aspect highlighted by post-colonial theorists is the connection between discourse and power and how colonialism was legitimimized through discourse and certain representations of the West and the Rest. The Western world was always described not only as superior and more developed, but also as “more rational, progressive, dynamic, masculine and democratic” (Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 43). Hence, a dichotomization system was constructed with a Eurocentric perspective of contrasting descriptions of the West and the rest of the world as modern/traditional, developed/underdeveloped, urban civilization/industrialized civilization, advanced/primitive (Mudimbe, 1988: 17,43), progressive/non-progressive and civilization/barbarity (Bhabha, 1994: 130). Similar dichotomies that were used are described by Eriksson Baaz: “nature/culture, reason/emotion, irrationality/rationality, body/mind, passivity/innovation, feminine/masculine, civilization/barbarism, unrestrained sexuality/control etc. (Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 43).

Moreover, post-colonial theorists highlight the important role that discourses of evolution, from savagery to civilization, had in legitimizing the colonial project (Crewe & Harrison, 1999: 27). What development is has been colored by the concept of evolutionism which emerged during the colonial era. What the evolutionary thesis contributed with, was the responsibility that the more
‘advanced’ was to lead the more ‘primitive’ to a more civilized position. It is characterized by a need to bring health to a sick world and establish order where there is none (Mudimbe, 1988: 65). In this process, the West was seen to have come further and being more modern, while the ‘developing world’ was seen as primitive and childish and not having reached the necessary level of maturity (Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 53). People have been placed at different stages of an evolutionary hierarchy, where Africans, as mentioned in the introduction, were placed at the very bottom (Ibid: 38).

As Bhabha argues, the discourse that circulated during the colonial era was contradictory in the sense that ‘the other’ was to be reformed and changed to be like the Western man, but still remain true to its own culture. Bhabha describes this as an “ironic compromise” where the ‘Other’ was supposed to be someone with whom the Western man could identify, but still be superior to and able to reform. This idea of mimicry was, in short, that the ‘Other’ was to be like the white man, but still not. In all its ambiguity, the method was used by the West to transform the Rest to be more appropriate and more disciplined. (Bhabha, 1994: 86).

Yet, what the concept postcolonialism really entails is a contested topic. McClintock, who is critical to the “post”, describes how “colonialism returns at the moment of its disappearance” and how the use of the prefix in postcolonialism should not refer to the end of colonialism (McClintock, p. 11). It is because of a continuance of “international imbalances in imperial power“ after decolonization that McClintock argues that the term postcolonialism is problematic (McClintock, p13). Contradictory to this interpretation of the theory, Stuart Hall states that “What ‘postcolonial’ certainly is not is one of those periodizations based on epochal ‘stages’, when everything is reversed at the same moment.” (Hall, 1995: 247). This explanation of what postcolonialism is does not consider it to be marking the end of the colonial era, but rather relate it to the aftermath of it. It reflects how, since decolonization, the colonial project has influenced identities and practices.

According to McEwan, postcolonial theory brings forth four essential contributions and criticisms to the table. First, it questions and problematizes how Western disciplines have, without respect and sensitivity, in many ways overrun other cultures and ideas. The portrayal of the South as primitive and the West as more progressive, with superior knowledge and expertise is questioned (McEwan, 2001: 94). Second, it highlights and problematized the process of
‘Othering’ and the use of other metaphors describing those who do not share Western values. Thirdly, it criticizes the homogenization of former colonized societies, though notions of the ‘Third World’. As McEwan concludes, naming it the ‘Third World’ homogenizes a large number of people, feeding the idea of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Lastly, postcolonialism seeks to speak for the marginalized peoples whose voices have been silenced and whose cultures have been overrun. This will be achieved through a reconstruction of how both history and knowledge are described (McEwan, 2001, 95).

Winther Jørgensen and Philips describe how all of us are shaped by our past and the cultural context in which we live, whether we like it or not. The way we perceive the world may change over time, but is still colored by events of the past. Not only does it affect our understanding of society but it also has an impact on how we represent the world (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 2000: 11). From this perspective there is reason to believe that these colonial discourses and dichotomies, as well as the idea to help those who have not developed as rapidly as Western societies have, have shaped the way we view people and it has affected our interpretation of the world. What is important to remember is that despite never having been a great colonial power, Sweden has been marked by colonialism and by the discourses that circulated during the colonial era. The country still abides in the after-math’s of a colonized world and it has shaped the identity of the nation (Eriksson Baaz, 2005: 34-35). Postcolonial development theorists argue that this interpretation of the world, shaped by postcolonialism, has had implications for how Western aid is exported.

**Postcolonialism and development**

While these colonial discourses have been present for a great number of years, it was when president Harry Truman announced the Truman doctrine in his inaugural address that the concept of ‘underdeveloped countries’ was first coined. He expressed how the United States and the West had a responsibility to manage the ‘underdeveloped’ regions of the world. He stressed how the more developed countries had the knowledge and capacity to deal with the issue of the economically disadvantaged (Escobar, 1995: 3–4). The aim was to improve the living conditions and manage the ‘primitive and stagnant’ economic situations in these countries. William Easterly calls this the Western attempts to transform the Rest (Easterly, 2006: 24-25).
The postcolonial field has contributed to the progress seen in the development industry today. Yet, Crewe and Harrison argue that while the respect for indigenous peoples has increased and the Western model has been challenged, recipients of development aid are often categorized as ‘them’. The ‘local way’ is often still considered to be the root of the problems (Crewe & Harrison: 1999: 29). Development agencies still use dichotomies similar to the ones used during the colonial era, thus indicating that the evolutionary hierarchy still exists in the discourse today. The people in the receiving communities are described as irresponsible and uneducated all while their local traditions are seen to be holding them back (Ibid: 30).

Many working within development agencies today agree on the notion that poor countries are unable to develop economically and that poor people will be unable to fight their way out of poverty, if obstacles of inequality are not managed. A nation cannot thrive without equal opportunities for all. Yet, this idea of equality within many development agencies is contradictory, as some equalities are placed higher than others. There are examples of racism towards the recipients, and such problems are not often talked about within the industry. The counter-productive discourses need to be acknowledged as they are prejudices and simplifications of a cultural context and are often generating actions of exclusion and oppression (Crewe & Fernando, 2006: 40-41). Crewe and Harrison describe the problems with such discourses: “When those in a position of power in a particular context represent the past or present with themselves at the centre, they consolidate their power in that context.” (Crewe & Harrison, 1999: 24).

Sharp and Briggs refer to this problem within the development industry as “a crisis of confidence”. The problem is not the intentions behind or the aims of development aid, which are often commendable. It is about how representations of the recipients feed the discourse and power relations stemming from the colonial era. In the admirable ambition to help the marginalized peoples, unknowingly, the imperial conceptions of the world is enforced and the ‘less developed’ peoples are silenced (Sharp & Briggs, 2016: 7).

What, then, does this mean for the future of development aid? A reoccurring question concerns whether it is possible work for development without reproduce the discourses of Western superiority. Can these power structures be undone? Can de-colonized development studies be achieved? (McEwan, 2001: 94). The challenge is to be able to work together constructively to achieve the desired goals while having contesting ideas (McEwan, 2001: 106). There is need to
make an effort to dismantle these discourses within development aid as it, with all its predicaments, is most crucial for the continuation with such projects. To be perceptive to the discourses, the positions of power and the consumption of Western ideas is essential for the future of an effective development industry (McEwan, 2001: 105).

**METHOD AND MATERIAL**

In this section, the material used for the analysis is presented and critiqued together with a discussion of the method discourse analysis and its benefits and limitations.

**Material**

Every year, Läkarmissionen publishes a number of issues of the membership magazine *Svenska Journalen*. The purpose of the magazine is to inform their members of the projects they contribute to and to give them the opportunity to read reports from the regions where the organization works (Läkarmissionen, 2018e). As the magazine is the primary method of communication that Läkarmissionen has with its donors, with features of people from different regions of the world, it will be the primary source of data for the analysis.

As a discourse is not only presented through written or spoken words but also images, the pictures connected to the articles will be taken into account. Pictures are interesting and relevant in an analysis of the portrayal of and the relationship between donors, aid workers and locals, as it says much about what positions they have in relation to each other. While it is important to the connection between images and the text, they require another kind of analytical tool (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 2000: 67). Due to this, the study will not contain a deep analysis of the pictures in the magazine, however, they will be considered in relation to the text.

Important to mention is also that as Svenska Journalen is written in Swedish it means that any citations used will be translated to English. This could be effected by a lack of knowledge from my part or misinterpretation of what of the author actually intents to communicate. To the best of my abilities I will try to translate as accurately as possible, still the interpretation of the text could, to some extent, falter and lack of reliability occur.

Each of the six issues from 2017 will be critically examined and studied. Due to failure to find the published version of the April issue online, Läkarmissionen was kind enough to share the version used in their proof-reading process. In this version, all pictures and articles are in order,
yet no ads have been attached. As the focus of the analysis will be on the articles in the magazine, this will not have a substantial affect the study.

All of the articles and texts about projects in Africa will be examined. As the number of articles and pieces featuring projects in Africa exceeded any of the other continents, articles about South and Central America were combined to assure fairly equal amounts of material to be compared. Features from Asia where considerably fewer than any other continent, and thus it was not possible to use as point of comparison.

**Method: Discourse analysis**

In line with post-colonial approaches, this study will build on discourse analysis. It is a suitable method as it concerns understanding patterns within a text to get a deeper understanding of the world in which we live (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 2000: 28). It seeks to critically explore the power structures within our society and find ways to invoke change where needed (Ibid: 8). The purpose is therefore not to understand what people intend to say or exploring the reality from which the discourse comes, but rather the representations themselves and how they construct a certain truth about the world (Ibid: 28). As the aim of this thesis is to examine whether the discourse within a development aid organization in Sweden is affected by historical perspectives and discourses, this method is particularly useful.

What is important to acknowledge, is that in all approaches of discourse analysis, the theory and method are closely aligned (Ibid: 10). It rests on the theory of social constructivism and especially that of poststructuralism. Poststructuralism emphasizes how we through language construct the world in which we live. These representations of reality also create it. It is the discourse that shapes our physical world and gives it its significance (Ibid: 15). Language and how language is used, not only creates the identities of our society, but also is key for changing norms. When the discourse changes, so does our world and how we interpret it (Ibid: 16-17). A discourse constructs social identities and relationships as well as systems of knowledge and significance (Ibid: 73). It is contributing to both production and reproduction of positions of power within society (Ibid: 79). This is particularly interesting in this study as it concerns how the colonial discourse has shaped the relationship between the West and the Rest, and the dichotomies which have placed the Western man in a position of power in relation to the ‘Other’. 


Of importance is also to understand that a discourse is created through a web of different concepts in which they are all put in relation to each other. A concept only acquires meaning when put in context with, and through the exclusion of others. An element can have a variety of rival interpretations, but it is in context to other elements that we fully understand how to exclude the irrelevant ones (Ibid: 33-35). However, this does not mean that an interpretation is always fixed. The structure of a discourse can be fluid and change over time through how the concepts are articulated (Ibid: 36).

**Analytical tools**

Following the basic ideas of discourse analysis and the post-colonial framework presented above, the analysis will proceed with more specific questions below as guidance. They have been formulated with the methodological and theoretical discussion as a backdrop and are related to and built on some of the dichotomies mentioned above, highlighted by postcolonial theorists. These dichotomies also divide the analysis in different themes. The complexities of some of these questions are described in the next section.

The first section revolves around the dichotomies active/passive and dependent/contributing:

- Who is action accounted to?
- Who does something?
- Who takes the initiative?
- Are the locals described as only dependent on the donors?
- Are the locals described as equals to the contributor?

The second part of the analysis is dedicated to dichotomies such as modern/traditional, rationality/irrationality, democracy and respect for human rights versus despotism and tyranny:

- Who appears as the rational one, proposing the right remedies?
- Are problems/challenges attributed to local traditions?
- Are local traditions described as respected/understandable or are they described as absurd or unreasonable and in that case how?
- Who is responsible for the problems at hand and how?
- To what extent is the problem attributed to local traditions and leaders lack of democratic and human rights sensibilities and a predisposition to corruption?
Finally, the differences between the portrayal of the locals in articles about Africa and South and Central America will be investigated. In this section, following analytical tools are used:

- Which region appears to be more developed: South and Central America or Africa?
- Can a difference be discerned regarding the questions posed above (i.e. active/passive and dependent/contributing, modern/traditional, rationality/irrationality, democracy and respect for human rights versus despotism and tyranny)?

**Limitations of the method**

McEwan explains how there are a number of problems with how postcolonial theorists often use discourse analysis to assess material within the development field. By doing so, there is risk of failing to address a number of important factors. For example, the theory often fails to take into account issues of “urgent life-or-death-questions” like child prostitution, human rights and genocide. If such issues were considered, the theory could more easily be used on the ground and would have a more substantial effect on the industry. She also discusses how both economic relations and global capitalism are often neglected within postcolonial studies and thus failing to address important ways in which power relations are upheld (McEwan, 2001: 102-103).

In line with these problems, there are a number of factors that limit the analytical framework of this thesis. Alternative aspects that may cause power relations to be maintained and motivations behind some of the portrayals may be overlooked. For example, it fails to address the economic relations and the development gap between the recipient communities and the organization, as well as the effect these factors may have on upholding the power relations between the different regions. Another limitation is that the organization is dependent on the donations they receive from their members and these donations are necessary to ensure that organization can achieve its goals, meet the needs of the recipients and ensure that human rights are upheld. This could be an explanatory factor for certain portrayals. As McEwan states, development texts are often problematic as they are justifying interventions, elevating some perspectives and neglecting others (McEwan, 2001: 103).

Yet while there are limitations with the approach, McEwan argues that the power relations that are upheld, as well as the power imbalances that can be implied in development texts, should and have to be addressed. Analyzing discourses within the industry is crucial and it is of great
importance to acknowledge that some voices are silenced in a variety of ways through how people are portrayed. This is why, despite its limitations, the approach is necessary. She states: “It is, therefore, imperative to explore the links between words, practices and institutional expressions of development, and between the relations of power that order the world and the word and images that represent the world” (McEwan, 2001: 103).

Due to the limitation of the approach, none of the findings of this study are absolute, but rather tendencies that can be considered to be enforcing the dichotomies mentioned above. This thesis attempts to investigate whether tendencies of postcolonial discourse can be found, but setting the principles of distinguishing between what factors that are truly postcolonial and what are caused by other factors is a separate research topic. This problem is also evident in regards to the second research question. Tendencies can be acknowledged in the texts, implying that the different regions are or are not placed at different levels of the evolutionary ladder. For example, the organization may use certain dichotomies more often in regards to one region compared to the other. However, as with the first research question, no finding is absolute, but rather tendencies to draw conclusions from.

Distinguishing between what factors that lie behind the portrayals would require a combination of different methodological approaches and a larger set of material. Due to limited time and resources this was not possible within the scope of this thesis. However, the limitations are acknowledged in both the analysis and the discussion.

**Positionality and reflexivity**

As Winther Jørgensen and Philips point out, the method used in this study and any other social constructivist approach is often critiqued on the grounds of it being subjective. How can a scholar claim that his or her interpretation of the world is the right one? The problem is that it can be difficult to examine a discourse which oneself is a part of. When conducting such an analysis it is therefore important to, as much as possible, exclude oneself from the material, even if it is not possible to be completely objective (Winther Jørgensen & Philips, 2000: 28–29). Yet, postcolonialists argue that we can never exclude ourselves from the system completely as we are part of the problem. Growing up, I myself had the dream of one day working to ‘save the orphan African children’ somewhere in a distant and primitive village in a country I knew nothing about. Although I, during recent years, have gone through a process of self-criticism and increased my
knowledge of the problems related to such an ambition, I have still been shaped by the dreams of my past and the discourses within my society. Even though I have, to best ability, attempted to remain objective, the work will inevitably be influenced by personal interpretation and background.

**ANALYSIS**

**Passive or active, dependent or contributing?**

In this section of the analysis it will be investigated whether dichotomies of passive/active and dependent/contributing can be found in the material. First, the articles about projects in Africa will be analyzed in this light, followed by features of the projects in South and Central America to which Läkarmissionen contributes.

**Projects in Africa**

As described earlier, the magazine is the main channel through which the organization communicates with its donors. The purpose of *Svenska Journalen* is to raise awareness of the work that Läkarmissionen does in the different regions and considerable space is given to describing the different projects and those who are contributing to making them possible. In some of the articles the attention is mainly given to the local partners and their contributions, while in other cases it is a presentation of what the Western and Swedish helper does for the people in different countries in Africa. In these cases the articles are about Western aid workers who are managing projects or Western volunteers visiting the projects for a short while.

There are instances in these features where the Swedish donors and aid workers are described as both the initiators and the active characters working for development in the different regions. It is emphasized how they, through sacrificing their own comfortable life, ensure stability in the region and contribute to the improvement of conditions and opportunities for the receiving communities. In these features, the local partner is mentioned in short while the donor, volunteer or aid worker are appraised for their sacrifice. For instance, in the fifth issue it is written:

> “Due to our presence in these regions, not only are the people receiving emergency aid, but also understand that they are not alone in a situation where the government has left them to take care of themselves” (Issue 5, p. 29)
One interpretation of this citation could be that it is a description of the situation in the country, where the government has, due to indifference, left the population in a difficult situation. The funds contributed by the donors and the actions of the organization are changing the situation for the local community. Yet, such phrasing can also be interpreted as the Western organization emerges as the caring actor who takes the responsibility that the government fails to take, describing the government as passive and the population as dependent.

Another example is the representations of the Swedish donors. The monthly donors who give money to the projects working with children in Africa are called “Guardian Angels”. In one of the features about a project in South Africa, it is expressed how much Swedish aid contributes to change:

"Take "Guardian Angel” as an example. To give a sum each month to help vulnerable children in South Africa, Ethiopia or Uganda, who live under tough conditions and whose live will be changed because of help that comes from Sweden.” (Issue 3: 17).

The monthly donors who do not only give to the children of Africa, but to any of Läkarmissionen projects, are called “Everyday Heroes” (Läkarmissionen, 2018d). Similar representations can be found in an interview with Lotta Gray, one of the ambassadors of Läkarmissionen. In her words she states:

“Even those who are not able to travel to Africa can contribute for example as Guardian Angel. By giving a sum of money every month to help exploited children in South Africa, Ethiopia or Uganda, who are living in difficult circumstances, and whose lives will change drastically thanks to the help coming from Sweden.” (Issue 3: 17)

That the organization has to acknowledge what the contributions of the donor will lead to and what significance it has for the projects is inevitable. Yet, to present the Western helper as a Guardian Angel or Everyday Hero, could be considered to be placing them in a superior position in relation to the recipients. It can also reinforce the dichotomies of contributing/dependent. The children are described as ‘exploited’ individuals who are helpless without the aid coming from the Western donors.

While there are a number of examples where the Western helper is described as self-sacrificing and a theme of the active Swedish aid worker and donor as the contributor in contrast to the dependent or passive local is implied, there are several articles representing the local partners and
acclaiming them for their commitment to work for change. An example of this can be found in one of the features in the first issue. It is emphasizes how the locals in the Kivu province in Democratic Republic of Congo are the real heroes of the story.

“Läkarmissionen is present in the region to give aid, but the real heroes are the ordinary families in the villages where the victims flee.” (Issue 1:18).

As illustrated in this citation is the work that the local partners do is both encouraged and emphasized and this continues throughout the feature. However, in the same article it is also implied that the government seem to be managing the crisis poorly by not being present and how little they seem to care about the villagers who are in need of their assistance. One example of this can be found in the following citation:

“How much those in charge and in positions of power in the capital actually care about the population in the North Kivu province is uncertain. However, judging by how much they are trying to help the tens of thousands of people who the last year has been forced to leave all their belongings, and who is now scantily accommodated in the homes of relatives or charitable families in the villages where they have fled: then the answer is almost nothing at all.” (Issue 1:18)

Thus, while the villagers are described in a narrative of heroism and self-sacrifice, the government in the Democratic Republic of Congo is described as passive and non-present. Throughout the feature it is elevated how committed Läkarmissionen does to aiding the villagers.

In addition to such representations in the texts, some of the pictures could also be considered to be indicating dichotomies of contributing/dependent. One of the articles is centered around the endeavors to eradicate female genital mutilation in Kenya. A large photo of a Swedish volunteer with four young Africans who have been saved from the practice is placed at the center of the article, while a small picture of the local partners can be seen in the right corner. In this article, the Western volunteer is placed at the center elevating her as the helper. However, the Kenyan woman, Mary Kawamboka, in charge of the project is praised in the text:

“It is easy to be impressed by her hard, inexhaustible work for these girls”. (Issue 2:10)

While the charities of Läkarmissionen are eminent and the local need for Western aid is emphasized, the text is also about the commendable work that Mary does in Kenya. Yet, these representations are slightly shaded by the large picture at the center focusing on the Swedish volunteer.
There are also images showing contradictory representations, where the local communities are presented as the main contributing party. In a section where pictures from the different continents are shown, you can see how a local midwife is examining a pregnant woman with the aim to show how the local contributions increases the chances for both the child’s and the mother’s survival (Issue 5:20). In this case, the local initiatives are accentuated rather than the Western aid organizations donations of aid and services.

Thus, the representations in relation to African communities throughout the magazines, could be interpreted as quite contradictory. On one hand the recipients are portrayed as active contributors in the pursuit for change: on the other hand there are still many representations of African men and women as totally dependent on the presence of the organization and the donations of the West. This duality can be found in an article about a project in South Africa:

“They want to and they can, but they need our help. ” – (Issue 3:16).

**Projects in South and Central America**

Several of the issues praises the work of Miriam Mondragon, born and raised in Piteå, Sweden (Issue 1:4). She has dedicated her life to the children of Honduras, a country which is described as “one if the most dangerous countries in the world”. She is portrayed as the “defender of the children” as she “gives the children a voice”. Together with a large picture of her, these citations are placed on the front-page of one of the issues. Further, in all of the features about her and her work, there is always a picture of her at the center, together with the children she has helped saving. The violent and chaotic nature of the current situation in the country is placed in contrast to the brave Swedish woman who sides with the children exposed to sexual abuse and harassment. In one of the interviews with her it reads:

“You have worked for many years to give justice to the children who would otherwise never have had a chance… While you are working you are putting your life danger. Where does your courage come from?” (Issue 1:4)

In her dedication, she is praised for her contributions to the people in Honduras who are dependent on her and the organization where she works. It is emphasized how she makes so many sacrifices and is carries the burdens of so many. While her commitment to these children is admirable and they may be dependent on her, such representations could be considered to be problematic.
She emerges as the savior of these children for whom she has sacrificed her safety and her comfortable life in Sweden. The dichotomies of passive/active and dependent/contributing are enforced throughout all of the articles, always naming her the active and contributing party.

In another article featuring the project in Honduras, Kurt Ver Beek, who is working in the same organization, is similarly acclaimed. Part of the title for one of the features it reads:

“Kurt Ver Beek has devoted his life to fight corruption and injustices in Honduras.” (Issue 6:22)

In the interview with him he expressed:

"We are an organization that has taken the responsibility to challenge the darkest powers in society… As newlyweds, my wife and I wanted to do something good for the world, but at the same time soothe our wanderlust… We were filled with dreams and visions, convinced that if we could give corrupt politicians and business managers a counterpart. “ (Issue 6:24)

Themes of the passivity of the receiving communities can be found in all of the articles about Honduras, while the Western organization is the initiating actor who manages to give the government the tools and expertise required for change.

“ASJ (the project to which Läkarmissionen contributes) has substantial influence and is properly organized. It has become a powerful tool in the work to challenge violence and corruption. The organization demonstrates to the president what the country needs – not the other way around.” (Issue 1: 6).

Both of these citations are presenting an idea that the government in Honduras is not only corrupt but also passive and irresponsible, and the articles are clearly stating the responsibility that both he and the organization have to fill the government’s shoes. The organization is “demonstrating what the country needs” and thus serving as an example, teaching a corrupt and mismanaged society how to handle their problems. Western ideas and norms are presented as the remedy for an unstable community.

Another feature is about a project, which with help from Läkarmissionen, was implemented in the favelas of Brazil to manage issues of virus diseases spread by mosquitos. In this case, the focal point of the article is to describe the current situation and what has been done in the area to limit the spread. However, in this case, the article is merely presenting the local opinions, rather than praising their own contributions.
“The civil society does not care. The police is not present in these areas, but instead drug gangs and armed teenage boys decide who gets to enter the neighborhood or not.” (Issue 3, p.11).

A local woman expressed her gratitude to the project:

“IT is a good project. In the favela there are many people who do not care about anything.” (Issue 3:11).

Thus, while there are critiques of the government’s management of the problems in the article, it is not only coming from a Western aid worker but from the locals themselves who are expressing their gratitude to the organization for doing what the government was unable or unwilling to do.

**Modern or traditional, rational or irrational and democratic or disrespect for human rights?**

As described in the theory section, colonialism was legitimized as a civilizing mission in which ideas about rationality, democracy and respect for the dignity of others should be brought to the colonized societies, described as irrational, despotic and brutal. This section is dedicated to investigating such dichotomies, first in the features about projects in Africa, and second, in articles in projects in South and Central America.

**Projects in Africa**

The irrationality of some local traditions are accentuated throughout the magazines. In particular, substantial space in several of the issues is given to the task to eradicate both female genital mutilation and male circumcision – a tradition that still exists in some cultures today. The procedure is portrayed as barbaric and brutal in its disrespect for human rights and the importance to abolish it is repeatedly emphasized. In one of the articles it says:

“The incident was the start of a commitment which has followed me over the years. To stop the tradition that takes so many lives. It is strange that this gruesome tradition can continue. That it, despite such obvious consequences, is so hard to break the destructive pattern” (Issue 2:7).

This representation places the Western idea of human rights in contrast to the unreasonable and absurd action of a local tradition which is described as “gruesome” and “destructive”, feeding the dichotomies of rational/irrational and respect of human rights/disrespect of human rights.
However, in the same article, the local partner in charge of the project, Mary Kawamboka, is as already discussed, acclaimed for her “hard and inexhaustible work for the girls”. A Western volunteer visiting the project stated:

“I am moved by the proud, strong people who have the courage and the strength to stand up against the cruel tradition.” (Issue 2:7).

This indicates that it is not the Western workers themselves who are making the local population revoke their traditions, but that the locals are actively questioning the norms and make efforts to pursue change. Thus, while the dichotomy of human rights/violation of human rights and rationality/irrationality is present in the text, it is not only Westerners who are questioning the traditions but also the communities themselves.

In this endeavor to stop genital mutilation, the project also makes effort to keep the traditions associated with the practice and has established an alternative rite to encourage those who have chosen not to undergo the procedure.

“Mary has encouraged the parents who support their children to celebrate them when they finished the ceremony, with gifts and sparkles, just like they would have if they had undergone a procedure” (Issue 2: 13).

This could be an indication of a respectful approach towards the local community and their cultural heritage, while trying to eradicate the traditions which are considered to be violating basic human rights. An interesting finding in this article was what one of the Swedish workers expressed:

“It is hard to come as a white spectator from a completely different context and write about other people’s culture, without knowing more than just some parts of it. There is always a risk of practicing exoticism when portraying what I have experienced and what Mary, who was born here, has told me “ (Issue 2:12).

Such a comment demonstrates an understanding for the complexity of and the need for evaluating the Western discourse of the ‘developing world’. This could indicate an awareness of the problems at hand and demonstrates a more careful approach in representing the receiving communities. It demonstrates an understanding that aid workers are sometimes lacking the necessary cultural and historical perspectives to fully be able to present the circumstances correctly.
In another article it is discussed how Pygmies from the Mbuti tribe in the Democratic Republic of Congo have been banished from their homes by other tribes.

“They have been banished from their traditional homes in the home in a distant part of the jungle. Yet, pretty soon, this unique project to give aid to self-help for the natives who had been used to be hunters and gatherers, now have to attempt to be residents to grow their own food.” (Issue 5:10)

The article focuses on how the project has contributed to changing the culture and attitude of the different tribes and challenged the norms of discrimination against them. There are descriptions of how the local organizations are denying responsibility to help the Mbuti, and that a mother with her sick child had been denied hospital care because she was unable to pay the hospital bill, causing the child to die. However, in the article it also reads:

“Things are getting better. The tribes interact much more than they did before and there are several examples of marriages between Bantu and Pygmies, which would not have been possible before.” (Issue 5:11)

This could be interpreted as an attempt to change the mindset and culture of the receiving communities while raising awareness of the disrespect for human rights in the region. The challenges and problems related to the ethnic discrimination is highlighted in the feature.

Projects in South and Central America
An article in the fourth issue presents a writing course implemented in Mexico, where there have been extensive problems with discrimination against the native tribe Zapotec. In the text it reads:

“The Zapotec in southern Mexico is one of the native peoples in the country and has in a variety of ways been discriminated. This is why the courses of reading and writing to which Läkarmissionen operate means so much.” (Issue 4:15).

Similar discourses can be found in the description of a project in Guatemala, which aims to provide literacy courses to the women. There has never been a school in this village and thus the goal of the project is to give these women the freedom and ability to make something of themselves.

The women, besides learning to read and write, also receive fundamental education in what rights they have as citizens (Issue 5: 5).
As illustrated in both of these citations, the remedy to the problem of disrespect for human rights and discrimination in the region is provided through the organization through the courses. It is not clear in the texts if it is Mexicans or Westerners who are implementing the project, but only that Läkarmissionen and their donors are providing the recipients with knowledge and expertise so that disrespect for human rights can be combated.

A feature by Annika Hagström is describing the contrast between the Sweden and Honduras. The author visited the capital Tegucigalpa during a trip to Honduras and Guatemala. She quotes her own diary and describes her reactions to the conditions in the city:

"Tegucigalpa! Oh my god. Large areas of the city has fallen to pieces. Scorching. People are digging up their cars and houses out of the dirt. Dead dogs floating around in the sludge.” (Issue 1: 26).

“I got to see sceneries I had only seen on pictures before, gorgeous greenery, trees with flowers and proud people showing me the most beautiful fabrics I have ever seen, woven by themselves on miniature looms. I also saw a garbage dump that got stuck in my mind. Not only by what I saw but also by what I experienced there among the garbage – where the vultures were circulating above my head. In my journal I wrote: “What a stench! Interviews with lonely, very young mothers with small, cute and dirty children. They live here.” (Issue 1: 26).

On one hand she describes the beauty of the country and the people, but she also expresses how there are abominable circumstances for those people living there. The discourses specify how irrational the situation in the country is. In this feature she compares it with Sweden, emphasizing the importance of understanding how lucky Swedish people are and how well they are off in contrast to those people living in Honduras. Another example of a similar discourse can be found earlier in the issue.

“...The current situation in Honduras can naturally not be compared to Sweden, but rather used as a warning signal to what happens when the society and the government are unable to find creative ways to counter crime rates". (Issue 1: 4)

Such representations could simply be a description of the current situation in the country, yet, when placed in contrast to Sweden, the dichotomies of the developed West and underdeveloped ‘Other’ are enforced.

As previously discussed, the chaos prevailing in the country and the inability of the government to manage the issues, is repeatedly discussed throughout the different issues. Kurt Ver Beek states:
“The children who are saved are growing up in such an unstable country and fundamental change is required for these people to have a decent future.” (Issue 1: 6).

In another article it reads:

“Only two percent of all crimes in Honduras reach trial, and the government as well as the legal system is corrupt. But the work the Rescue does has seen results. They have managed to achieve important changes in the rule of law that counteract corruption. By doing so they have also increased the legal security in society.” (Issue 4: 24)

These citations imply an image how Honduras should become better at managing their problems, become more modern and Western in order for the children to have the future they deserve. The aim of the project has been to contribute to changing the laws and regulations of the country and influence the government to take actions for change. From a democratic perspective, legislative changes to ensure that no human rights are violated could be seen as the rational choice of action as remedy for current problems. Yet, such representations of Honduras and their inability to manage their problems, and proposals of a solution to them, could also be seen as reflecting a classic representation where democracy, rationality and good governance is presented as something exclusively Western.

Comparing the representations of Africa and South and Central America

The second research question is concerned with whether people living on the African continent are still represented as placed at the bottom of the evolutionary development ladder compared to other formerly colonized regions. There are examples in the articles about projects in Africa as well as in articles about projects in South and Central America, that could be considered to reflect such representations. There are, for example, in both the cases, descriptions of how the organization has to work against the governments to manage the issues they through their passivity have created.

In the theory section it was discussed how the Africans have historically been placed lower than other colonized regions on the evolutionary ladder. However, in the analysis of whether the locals are described as the dependent and passive actor, it could be argued that the South and Central Americans are placed even lower than the Africans rather than vice versa. In none of the articles
in any of the six magazines analyzed were the people in South and Central America described or even mentioned as the contributing party. It is merely a description of the self-sacrificing and contributing character of the Western organization and aid workers and the how the local communities were dependent on their presence. Yet, as cited earlier, (see page 19 and 21), there are representations of African communities as active partners repeatedly throughout the issues:

“It is easy to be impressed by her hard, inexhaustible work for these girls”. (Issue 2:10)

“Läkarmissionen is present in the region to give aid, but the real heroes are the ordinary families in the villages where the victims flee.” (Issue 1:18).

While the Africans, similar to the South and Central Americans, could be considered to be labeled as dependent on Western aid, they are also described as “the real heroes” and are subject to praise and admiration for their contributions to development in their own societies.

In the second part of the analysis, where traces of dichotomies such as modern/traditional, rational/irrational and human rights/violations of human rights are investigated, the differences between the regions are not as apparent as in the first section. The irrationality and brutality of the African tradition of genital mutilations were accentuated and so was the discriminatory actions towards the Mbuti tribe. Similar issues of discrimination about a “native tribe” can be found in an feature about a project in Mexico working for empowerment of the Zapotec tribe. Yet, in this case it is rather about describing the situation rather than questioning the rationality of it. Such images and dichotomies instead become evident in multiple features about a project in Honduras. As previously discussed, the lack of development in Honduras it is much emphasized in Svenska Journalen. The current legislations are illustrated as irrational and the legal system as corrupt.

Thus, the articles on Africa accentuate issues of human rights violations and the irrationality the cultural traditions while the South and Central American cases are more concerned with the irrationality of the government and its management of the problems as well as a dichotomies of developed/underdeveloped.
DISCUSSION

Throughout the analysis, it becomes evident that the organization is prioritizing to present local initiatives and local cultures to their donors through Svenska Journalen. Many of their partners in the collaborating countries are presented as successful contributors for a better world and the work they do is celebrated as some of the examples in the analysis have shown.

Yet, while there is an apparent devotion to the receiving communities and partners, which should not be mistaken as ideas of superiority and preeminence, there are occasions where representations of the recipients can be considered to be reproducing the discourses that historically legitimized the colonial projects. One of the most illustrative examples of such representations is how the Swedish donors are named “Guardian Angels” and “Everyday Heroes” in their contributions to “those less fortunate”. Such language, indicating the self-sacrificing and heroic character of the Western aid worker, which the exploited recipients are dependent on, is iterated in some of the articles. Additionally, there are several examples of how the governments are described to be failing to meet the needs of their populations and how Läkarmissionen, together with its collaborating partners, is providing them with the expertise and means needed for managing the problems. On one hand, this could merely be a description of the problems facing these communities and the remedies needed to manage these issues. These communities are faced with extreme challenges that have to be communicated in the magazine to give a truthful description of the regions. Yet, while this may be true, descriptions of the government and the people in the recipient communities as passive and absent could be considered to be problematic from a postcolonial perspective. There is risk of unknowingly implying that the donor and the development organization are the “saviors” and describing the government and the recipients in these communities as incapable, passive and obsolete. However, while analyzing representations in the features, there are contradictions evident. Local communities are described as the heroes and contributing parties, but also as both passive, helpless and exploited people, who are in need of Western aid and the knowledge it brings, indicating postcolonial tendencies.

In search for the answer to the second research question regarding tendencies of an evolutionary hierarchy between geographic regions, the findings were puzzling and contradictory to what many postcolonial scholars argue have been evident throughout history. As was explained in the theoretical section, Africans have historically been placed lower on the development hierarchy
than other former colonized regions. While there were examples of dichotomies placing Westerners in a more advanced position in both the articles from Africa and the articles from South and Central America, there were instances where the South and Central Americans seemed to be placed even lower than the Africans. They were never described as the contributing party and their passivity and inability to manage the problems at hand were accentuated repeatedly. The representation of the underdevelopment and difficult circumstances for the receiving communities in South America and Central America, especially in Honduras, were underlined to a greater extent than in the articles about Africa. In these features, the Western aid worker was always presented as the savior and the good Samaritan who sacrificed his or her comfortable life for the receiving communities. The organizations were described as the guardians who took the responsibility that the governments failed to take.

What could be the explanatory factors for this? While it is beyond the scope of this study to provide any explanations, some suggestions can be proposed, which might be picked up in forthcoming research. One possible explanation could be that the development industry has been subject to much criticism the last couple of years for reproducing colonial images (Sharp & Briggs, 2016: 7) and in this criticism much emphasis has been put on the African peoples have been represented (Eriksson Baaz, 2005). This could have resulted in that organizations have been particularly focused on doing what they can to dismantle such discourses in relation to aid in Africa. However, if this is the case, it seems as if they have overlooked to take into account that similar discourses are as problematic in regards to other regions as well.

Another possible explanatory factor could be that during the analysis it became clear that most of the articles and features from South and Central America containing such tendencies were about projects in Honduras. There were traces in other articles as well, but the number of features from Honduras far exceeded other South or Central American counties. The projects discussed in the articles about Honduras were all managed by Westerners, hence not only receiving aid from the West and implemented by the local organization. This could explain why the receiving community is not raised as the contributing party. In contrast to this, were some of the articles on African projects about people in the collaborating country who themselves were in charge of the projects to which the organization contributed. However, whether the receiving community is the contributing party or not, the discourses do not necessarily have to be colored by an idea of the
Western worker as the savior in a chaotic country with a passive government. Such representations should be problematized and dismantled in the development industry.

As discussed earlier, there are some limitations with the analytical framework as it is not possible to declare the motivations behind some of these portrayals. It was discussed how it may be difficult to distinguish whether some portrayals are truly postcolonial or whether they are a result of other explanatory factors. For example, there is a point of, through this magazine, raising emotions and explaining how severe the conditions can be in these communities in order to receive the funds necessary to achieve the desire goals and make a difference. Yet, the fact that there is a fine line between what are and what are not postcolonial tendencies indicates that there is reason to be cautious. Understanding how words, expressions and images, however well-intentioned they may be, can be part of reproducing postcolonial discourses is most crucial to constructively work for development in the future.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

Through this thesis it can be concluded that postcolonial tendencies are still apparent in the magazines by Läkarmissionen. Indications of the evolutionary hierarchy can also be found, however, it is the South and Central Americans rather than the Africans who are placed at the bottom.

The findings from this study indicate that there is need of more discussion of the problem with how Western development agencies are presenting the receiving communities in regards to both cultural traditions, ability to manage problems and dependency on Western aid. There is need to raise awareness of how organizations can express themselves in a manner that does not contribute to placing the receiving communities in a position of dependency or describing them as passive or irrational.

Looking to the future, research could be conducted to investigate whether the critique towards the development industry, in regards to how Africans have been portrayed, has had an effect on the positions of former colonized regions on the evolutionary ladder. Moreover, it is crucial to continue to study how development industry can work to dismantle the postcolonial representations of the receiving communities.
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Material

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