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BEYOND THE SMILE: THE INFRAPOLITICS OF THE HOST IN VOLUNTEER TOURISM

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Central to the volunteer tourism experience is the encounter with the host community. Much of the existing literature privileges the voices of volunteers and organizations, with the perspectives of the local communities poorly represented. This study on the host–guest relationships of orphanage volunteer tourism in Nepal challenges the understanding of the stable and hierarchical configuration of power. It reflects on the multiplicity and particularity of political action and how this action is not only found in the grand narratives of historical social change, but often unfolds in the small, fragile, and repetitive actions of touristic daily lives. By focusing on the acts of performing volunteer tourism, this article questions the victimization of those who are at the edges of traditional power structures.

Key words: Volunteer tourism; Infrapolitics; Host; Ethnography; Nepal

Introduction

> The term infrapolitics . . . seems an appropriate shorthand to convey the idea that we are dealing with an unobtrusive realm of political struggle. For a social science attuned to the relatively open politics of liberal democracies and to loud, headline-grabbing protests, demonstrations and rebellion, the circumspect struggle waged daily by subordinate groups is like infrared rays, beyond the visible end of the spectrum. That it should be invisible . . . is in large part design—a tactical choice born of a prudent awareness of the balance of power. (Scott, 1990, p. 312)

This study on the host–guest relationships of orphanage volunteer tourism in Nepal challenges the understanding of the stable and hierarchical configuration of power. It reflects on the multiplicity and particularity of political action and how this action is not only found in the grand narratives of historical social change, but often unfolds in the small, fragile, and repetitive actions of touristic daily lives. By focusing on the acts of performing volunteer tourism, this article questions the victimization of those who are at the edges of traditional power structures.

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Central to the volunteer tourism experience is the encounter with the host community (locals, children, orphanage spaces, and materialities). Framed in the development aid discourses, the encounter with the local population implies a neocolonial binary power structure, seemingly predefined in advance, where the volunteer, often from the North, is expected to help alleviate poverty in the Global South country. Volunteer tourism is a controversial topic with a vastly growing body of literature (Cheer, 2018; Cheer et al., 2019; Mostafanezhad, 2016; Wearing, 2001; Wearing & McGehee, 2013). The advocacy stream of research underlines the potential of volunteer tourism to benefit local communities, the value of the person-to-person relationship, and the cultural exchange dimension (Broad, 2003). A more critical stream emphasizes the negative impact on the host community (Devereux, 2008; Guttentag, 2009; Mostafanezhad, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2016; Sin, 2009). Guttentag (2009) claimed that volunteer tourism expeditions lead host communities to become dependent upon the Western sending organizations, promoting laziness and undermining the hosts' dignity. Thus, this literature points to how the volunteer tourism market weakens local communities. Authors have denounced the postcolonial and neoliberal agendas of volunteer tourism (Mostafanezhad, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2016; Palacios, 2010; Simpson, 2004).

Most recently, some scholars have denounced orphanage tourism as a form of modern slavery (Bott, 2021; Cheer et al., 2019; Guiney, 2018). Cheer (2018) argued that the commodification of the development agenda and good intentions have transformed poor children into a tourist attraction and object of consumption, thereby transforming orphanages into sites of modern slavery (Cheer, 2018). In the same fashion, in her study on an orphanage in Cambodia, Guiney (2018) suggested that orphanage managers force children to smile and behave in a friendly way toward volunteers in order to keep the businesses running.

Most of these significant contributions take the position of following the volunteer or the volunteer organizations and exposing the contradictions of their engagements. This volunteer gaze, however relevant, leaves the voices of locals poorly represented. Scholars talk about hosts and write "in the name of the host," but rarely let them speak for themselves (Bott, 2021; Lee, 2020; Miller & Beazley, 2022). Often, this underrepresentation is explained by inaccessibility to the residents due to gaps in socioeconomic and cultural background, as well as language differences (McGehee & Andereck, 2008). Framed as either beneficiary or exploited, the local community is often conceptualized as the object and not the subject, except for the few studies in which the locals are depicted as corrupted (Guiney, 2018). Power in this relationship is generally portrayed as being on the side of the volunteer tourists or organizations, while the hosts are portrayed as submissive. By mostly speaking for and about the locals as passive victims (objects), researchers may paradoxically reproduce the form of injustice that they accuse volunteers of enacting, this time at an epistemic level.

Our study addresses this key issue by placing the host community that provides and enables orphanage volunteer tourism at the center of the research and by examining its everyday practices of resistance. We begin by presenting how these touristic encounters have been portrayed in the tourism studies literature and by introducing the concepts of infrapolitics (Scott, 1983, 1990). These theoretical constructs are then applied to discuss the empirical data and insights gathered during ethnographic fieldwork.

Volunteer Tourism and Host Community Identity

Within tourism studies, the portrayal of hosts has evolved from homogeneity to heterogeneity (Sharpley, 2014). Initially, host communities were seen as the containers of cultural heritage that is transformed into tourism products (Deng, 2010). The commoditization of local culture and rituals was considered to have the potential to transform and destroy many local societies (Cohen, 1988). Turning a culture into a commodity changes the once-authentic to a staged performance at which locals perform a role for money. This is what Aramberri (2001) called "romancing the host" (p. 747), in the sense that host societies are conceptualized as homogenous societies liable to damage by guests. In such context, the host–guest relationship is seen largely in terms of the hosts' positive or negative perceptions of tourism development (Serra-Cantallops & Ramon-Cardona, 2017; Sharpley, 2014; Tosun, 2002).

In addition to its economic impacts, volunteer tourism is a potential source of social conflict arising out of host–guest relations. There are three main stakeholders: volunteer tourists, volunteer organizations, and host communities. Specifically for this form of orphanage volunteer tourism, the hosts (understood as those that enable and provide hospitality to the volunteers) consist mainly of the local project coordinators, the families, and the kids. While there has been an increased interest in acknowledging the importance of the community in the studies of orphanage tourism, much of the literature is skewed toward the first two stakeholders (see, e.g., Butcher & Smith, 2015; Conran, 2011; Mostafanezhad, 2014; Palacios, 2010; Tomazos & Butler, 2010), with some authors complaining that host communities tend to effectively be "written out" of research on volunteer tourism As indicated by Guiney and Mostafanezhad (2015), "Orphanage tourism literature suffers from a limited understanding of the industry with most publications focused on the volunteer tourist experience" (p. 134). Yet, with the rise of awareness about orphanage tourism as modern slavery, some recent work tried to understand the local experience (Bott, 2021; Lee, 2020; Miller & Beazley, 2022). Worth mentioning is the work of Bott (2021) "'My dark heaven': Hidden voices in orphanage tourism," where she highlighted the urgency to bring the perspective of the children to better understand their experiences of orphanage tourism.

Furthermore, recent work has focused on how to decolonize volunteer tourism not only by denouncing white saviorism and modern slavery practices (Bott, 2021; Cheer et al., 2019) but rather by examining how to transform it "into a practice of mutual solidarity?" (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2023, p. 2788). In this article, we aim to contribute to this stream of research by studying the locals' agency and the performative way host communities veil their resistance to volunteer tourism.

The seminal work of MacCannell (1973), for instance, showed how host communities intentionally arrange tourist spaces to give the impression of authenticity (staged) to tourists while precluding them from reaching the authentic (real) of back regions. Thus, host community resistance to tourism can take the form of acceptance of the inevitability of tourism on one hand and an ongoing negotiation of the form of host–tourist encounters on the other hand. Research has arrived at a shared understanding that the host–guest relationship is mutually constituted and shaped by the interactions of host communities and tourists. However, little is known about the ways in which host communities deploy both overt and covert strategies in resisting and reshaping tourism encounters for their own goals. Joseph and Kavoori (2001), for instance, examined the discursive and rhetorical strategies used by local communities in Puskkar, India in mediating host–guest relations and their involvement in the tourism sector. Wei et al. (2018) also explored the subtle, covert forms of resistance used by the Mosuo host communities around Lugu Lake in Southwest China. They showed the ways in which the host communities make use of self-orientalism and in-jokes in their interactions with tourists as both "a covert tactic of negotiation and an explicit form of resistance" (Wei et al., 2018, p. 96).

This emerging research on host resistance to tourism development provides an avenue to address questions about how host community resistance plays out in different tourist contexts, such as volunteer tourism.

Infrapolitics

Infrapolitics, a term developed by the anthropologist James Scott (1990), refers to the forms of veiled resistances present in the background of everyday social interactions. Infrapolitics offers a new way to observe and interpret resistance to domination and the interrelationship between hosts and guests. Infrapolitics relies on the concept of the hidden transcript. The idea of a transcript is a classical term in sociology and anthropology that refers to the speech, acts, and actions often taken for granted in a social role. In tourism management literature, transcripts refer to the open scripts and behavioral rules that govern the performance of a specific professional role, especially those that are at the interface of contact with tourists. Compared to these open transcripts, Scott (1990) suggested that the hidden transcript is "often expressed openly, although in disguised form" (p. 311). It refers to the veiled techniques of resistance used by oppressed groups as a response to hegemony. The theory of infrapolitics helps us to pay attention

to the multiple entanglements and complexities of power. Infrapolitics becomes a space in which individuals and groups scheme covert agendas for self-maintenance through oral discourses among others (Michaud, 2012). According to Scott, the subordinate groups cannot express their opposition openly in the public sphere because they are aware of their position in a hierarchy of power. Instead, they disrupt this hierarchy in a veiled way, revealing their disagreement through disguised tactics of surreptitious resistance. Such resistances take the form of "rumors, gossip, folks, songs, gestures, jokes and theatre of the powerless . . . by which, among other things, they insinuate a critique of power while hiding behind anonymity or behind innocuous understandings of their conduct" (Scott, 1990, p. 311).

The theory of infrapolitics outlines the difference between declared resistances, such as rebellions, strikes, and petitions, and undeclared resistance, in which groups engage in creative and subversive forms of protest by operating just below the legal radar of authorities (Frohlich & Jacobsson, 2019), thereby contributing to multiple meanings of what can be considered the political. This hidden method of resistance is found in everyday life—for instance, in squatting, loitering, and dragging, but also in art and ceremonies. The theory of infrapolitics challenges other socialist thinkers such as Trotsky, who considered ritual practices and ceremonies "conservative forces" because they help to absorb the anger of the subordinate groups and consequently sustain domination.

Scott sees the microlevel of veiled resistance and the macrolevel of social revolutionary change as interdependent and argued that infrapolitics are the "foundational form of political action" and provide "the building block for more elaborated institutionalized political action" (Scott, 1990, p. 325). In line with the French philosopher Michel de Certeau (1990), Scott (1983) celebrated the disguised and undeclared form of resistance found in everyday life and practices by seeing the hidden transcript as the "weapon of the weak." It is these small-scale, highly creative, and subversive forms of resistance that we need to grasp to understand the ways in which host communities express their views of and experiences of volunteer tourism. The theory of infrapolitics, its wariness of grand revolutionary narratives, and its attention to repetitive and taken-for-granted daily practices resonates with Judith Butler's (2007) theory of performativity "performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration" (p. xv). In tourism studies the application of performativity theory has challenged the idea of tourists and hosts performing conscious and instrumental roles. Instead, it helps us see that which is unreflexive or habitual in tourism relationships, emphasizing how the mundane and the everyday constitutes much of the tourism experience (Edensor, 2012). Relationships are performative and becoming, where both hosts and guests have expectations about their roles and power positions that are internalized and displayed in daily life interactions (Benali & Ren, 2019).

The ideal type of host portrayed in the literature has the same normative and rational limitations as essentialism in general. The host appears as an "essence," a fixed category to be filled by living people aposteriorly. As the previous explanation of the literature shows, volunteer hosts' categorizations may relate to their goodness, purity, or authenticity, as well as other essentialist traits often to be found in the myth of the noble savage and at the same time their victimization, powerlessness, and inferiority characteristic of paternalistic and colonial worldviews. In the same vein, Costa (1998) argued that "not only do Europeans come to see Orientals in a particular way, with certain characteristics; Orientals may come to see themselves in the same terms" (p. 306).

Infrapolitics enables us to critically examine how the covert and overt resistance of communities to volunteer tourism plays out.

Context of the Study

In Nepal, volunteer tourism is coordinated by one major local organization through a web of local projects (orphanages, schools, and environmental projects). The orphanage in this study can be considered representative of orphanages in Nepal, and was located in the Kathmandu Valley in the district of Lalitpur. In addition, the socioeconomic characteristics of the children here (see Table 1) reflect the composition of many of the orphanages, with

Table 1
Orphan's Socioeconomic Characteristic

Children	Gender	Status of Guardian (Alive/Dead/Disabled)	Age	School Grade	Caste
Child 1	M	Alive	18	Nursing	Chettri
Child 2	F	Orphan (unknown)	18	12	Ethnic group
Child 3	M	Orphan	15	10	Chhetri
Child 4	M	Mother dead; Father alive	16	10	Chhetri
Child 5	M	Alive	16	10	Chhetri
Child 6	M	Alive	15	9	Chhetri
Child 7	F	Father unknown	15	8	Chhetri
Child 8	F	Dead (orphan)	14	8	Dalit
Child 10	M	Alive	13	6	Chhetri
Child 11	F	Dead (orphan)	14	5	Dalit
Child 12	M	Dead (orphan)	11	4	Unknown
Child 13	M	Orphan	6	UKG	Unknown
Child 14	F	Orphan	9	2	Unknown
Child 15	F	Orphan	9	1	Unknown
Child 16	M	Orphan	10	1	Unknown
Child 17	M	Orphan	10	3	Chhetri
Child 18	F	Alive	15	9	Dalit
Child 19	M	Orphan	17	7	Unknown
Child 20	F	Orphan	8	2	Unknown
Child 21	F	Father dead; Mother alive	16	7	Chhetri

Note. These data come from HOPAD (the orphanage) report and were sent from the director of the orphanage HOPAD. Source. Benali (2018).

most of them coming from the lower caste (*Dalit*, or "unknown"), and almost half of the children having one parent alive.

The orphanage is composed of the director, his wife, the care mother, and 21 children. It provides children with accommodation, education, food, and health and sports activities. It hosts an average of two volunteers staying from 2 weeks to 10 months. The language spoken is Nepalese. However, hosts usually communicate with the volunteers in English (when they can speak it). Being a patriarchal society, the heads of families and representatives of organizations in Nepal tend to be men.

Methodology

This article is part of larger project, a Ph.D. thesis on volunteer tourism market. The fieldwork conducted by the first author took place in an orphanage in Nepal during a combined period of 3 months over 2 years. As the concept of infrapolitic refers to veiled tactics of resistance, the reflections exposed in this article draw mainly from the first author's ethnography in the orphanage including observations, informal discussions, and gossips. These daily observations and daily life communicative experiences happened with the coordinator, women, and children in the orphanage.

Participant observation is a deeply embodied experience comprised of a rich amount of impressions and personal interactions. The ability of the researcher to be included and participate fully in the examined environment, which included children and women in the families, plays a key role in the possibilities of accessing information about daily life entanglements and interpreting experiences. Hence, by applying a reflexive model to the participant observation, intersubjectivity became a tool to acquire deep understanding of the phenomena. Instead of advocating objectivity, this methodology "embraces engagement as the road to knowledge" (Burawoy, 1998, p. 5). In addition, we draw on four interviews among eight (see Table 2) with the main actors involved in the volunteer tourism program that the first author has been part of. All of them are male (Ramesh, Prakash, Karan, and Gopal), and this is a limitation of the study, but it also represents the patriarchal structure of the local society. Unfortunately, the first author doesn't speak the local language; kids (teenagers), who were very fluent in English, played the role of interpreter and facilitated the communication with Didi, the care

Table 2
Informants' Characteristics

Informant	Gender	City	Function
Ramesh	M	Kathmandu	National field coordinator
Lila	M	Chitwan	Local coordinator
Amrita	F	Chitwan	Principal at school
Prackách	M	Lalitpur	President of orphanage
Gopal	M	Kathmandu	Volunteer coordinator in a monastery
Gopal	M	Chitwan	Host family
Karan	M	Kathmandu	Host family
Purna	F	Kathmandu	Volunteer coordinator in a hospital

mother and the grandmother. Thus, the first author was unable to formally interview them, but her stay at the orphanage and their interaction inform part of our reflection on infrapolitics.

Additional care to avoid misinterpretation of the data was achieved by sharing the preliminary analysis with a 19-year-old boy in the orphanage as well as with Ramesh, the project coordinator in Nepal. The first author was in permanent communication with them and this dialogue informed the final thematization and interpretation presented in the article. She also sent parts of her text to discuss if her interpretation was appropriate. The choice of these two people is based on established friendly relationships that allowed them to express their opinions freely. Moreover, both of them have seen many volunteers in their lives. For instance, Ramesh stated that during his career in the local organization, he had managed more than 4,000 volunteers. Further analysis of the data consisted of a theory-related dialogue and discussion among the authors. Thus, we can argue that the analysis is cocreated by the researchers and these two hosts.

Positionality (First Author Reflections)

I was introduced to the orphanage hosts as a volunteer with research interest on the topic of voluntourism. During my first visit, I actively participated in the everyday life of the orphanage: teaching kids, bathing them, helping in the kitchen. Besides my close contact with the hosts and the children, I developed close relationship with volunteers, neighbors, and the school director. My first week at the orphanage was eventful, especially in terms of food adaptation. Dal bhat (rice and lentil soup) is the primary dish in Nepal, and we had it twice every day. My stomach was not adapted to having such a heavy meal for breakfast, and I stopped eating in the mornings, which was considered a snobbish attitude by the locals. This problem represented a barrier for my social integration, but luckily, I could compensate for my seeming lack of appreciation for their food with spontaneous dancing after dinner. Dancing saved face and allowed me to create a positive and real connection with children and other adults in the orphanage.

The focus of my first stay was on integration and trust building with the host family, children, and the project coordinator. After leaving, I stayed in touch with the orphanage through social media. One year later, I returned for my second fieldwork. This time, I experienced an important change in the relationship with the locals. I was welcomed as a friend and no longer considered a voluntourist. At least this is how I felt. I spent most of this time with the host family and local friends. It appeared that I had somehow gained their trust and they knew that I would remain loyal to the orphanage. In addition, trust between me and the hosts was strengthened by emphasizing my country of origin (Tunisia). Being a woman from the Global South myself with a physical appearance close to that of Nepalese/Indian women positioned me in a status of "almost local," a "hybrid." As one of the teenagers told me once, "You are like the point of intersection, *Sisi* ("sister" in Nepalese)." I was the outsider, but my background made the subtleties of life easier to understand. I was the privileged coming to study the other, but I was not in a pity mode with the locals. I was affected by poverty but not romanticizing it, and they knew it. I was aware of my power position, but I did not see them as victims.

Yet sometimes, especially in the beginning, there were many moments of frustrations and confusions during my fieldwork—attitudes that I could not understand. One day, after my fieldwork, I was sitting in the sun, reading a book, I came across Scott's chapter "the Infrapolitics of subordinate Group" and I told myself "now I got it. . . . Now I see what was it!" I was relieved and somehow, I felt happy of them (the local) exploiting me.

Findings

Nepalese people are usually depicted as smiling, peaceful, and pure, primarily by the media and promotional tourism material that denies a decade of civil war between the former Kingdom of Nepal and the Maoist. However, the relationship between host and guest is not as smooth as marketed on the promotional website and in volunteer tourists' narratives on social media. In fact, everyday interaction reveals another facet of the relationship. Frustrations, misunderstandings, ambiguities, and conflicts are central to the experience (Benali, 2018). Some of these are due to cultural differences and language barriers, and we argue that another reason is related to the perception of otherness. Therefore, managing otherness is a fundamental part of the everyday life of a Nepalese orphanage. Host narratives show a dialectical tension between compliance and resistance, revealing the complex relational entanglements with the volunteers. To understand these dialectical tensions, it is first important to know how locals depict the self and the other.

Local Self-Depiction

> When people come to this country, people come from different countries. At least, they have to know about the country; and when they come to the country to volunteer or something like that, they expect hot water staying in the orphanages, electricity like for 24 hours, Internet access in their rooms. That's impossible when people go to underdeveloped countries, and I'm not only talking about Nepal. If you go to Africa, it is also poor. People are dying without food—they cannot provide you with that. (Ramesh)

Ramesh is the coordinator of the local organization that receives volunteers in Nepal and is based in Kathmandu. He has been working in the field of volunteer tourism for 9 years. Ramesh defines Nepalese identity in opposition to the West, emphasizing what Nepal lacks compared to the "developed" world. Material poverty, manifested in the absence of hot water, electricity, and internet access, is one of the main differences, and this may be a shock for Western volunteers, as they do not expect such living conditions. Ramesh does not want to denigrate his own country too much, so he adds a comparison with Africa as even poorer, implicitly defining another otherness with some shared traits. Most of the hosts we have been in touch with express an apparent separation between the self and the Western volunteers. The self is depicted as poor, underdeveloped, uneducated, and lacking economic capital. This reflects Said's (1978) argument that the Orientalist discourse is reflexive and the differentiation between self and other is natural and universal.

Despite a lack of material wealth, locals' narratives reveal pride in their culture and traditions. Locals portray themselves as generous, welcoming, peaceful, and culturally rich in opposition to Westerners, who are seen as materially wealthy but culturally poor. Similar to the study of the Mosou communities by Wei et al. (2018), locals showed self-orientalist tendencies, describing themselves as poor, wild, and lacking knowledge, but at the same time kind and generous.

> I'll give you an example. In Nepal, when people are sitting like guests or something, see, they are the Gods. See, guests are the symbol of God! In Europe, when you knock on the door, if you behave like this, you would have some problems. There is not like a hotel or someplace like that if you want to spend the night. If you knock on the door, people don't care about you; but here in Nepal, you knock on the door, they welcome you. They don't know about you, the people don't know you. You are new to them—what are you to them? But they don't care about that; a guest is a God. When you go, when you knock on the door, that means that a God came in. Well, people think like this, it's still like that in remote areas. I'm saying about the city—in the city, people are like more selfish. (Ramesh)

In fact, hosts perceive themselves through the Western lens as peripheral, they are the margin; the poor of a poor country. This lens contributes to shaping social reality and subjectivity, as it enables and limits understandings of the relationship between self and other. The hosts appear doubly sanctioned by the macrosystem where the Global North center is seen as defining the norms and in possession of both cultural and economic capitals, and by the Nepalese caste system, wherein the host families and orphans belong to the lowest caste. Locals' narrative insinuates a hidden transcript (Scott, 1990) in which they are not passive followers impressed

by the Western culture. Locals understand the economic power game but perceive themselves as possessing moral superiority, which is used as a form of resistance to Western culture.

Resistance: The Hidden Transcript

In the very foundation of the postcolonial and capitalist volunteer tourism marketplace (Devereux, 2008; Guttentag, 2009; Mostafanezhad, 2013a, 2014), Western volunteer tourists have agency over the local population. For many Western volunteer tourists, placement at an orphanage is a stage, a hero's journey during which they experience poverty and otherness in a limited time and place. They come from different backgrounds, different cultures, different gender and age to consume local culture. They want to live local people's life, and a fair proportion intends to teach locals to speak English, how to see the world, how to dress, how to eat with a spoon, and how to wipe with toilet paper instead of washing with water. Some come to question the way locals love and take care of their children, the way they educate them, and the way they punish them (Benali, 2018). For the hosts, this is their everyday life and this sometimes can lead to friction when volunteers are perceived as having a patronizing attitude towards locals. Local narratives reveal outrage against such attitudes. However, resistance to these approaches is not expressed explicitly through boycotting or openly rejecting volunteers. It is instead articulated through a hidden transcript (Scott, 1990) found in gossip and some excluding positions, such as keeping physical distance. Like a secret garden, the core culture of the locals, their relationships with each other, and their real problems and feelings are kept protected and inaccessible to the Western volunteers. The gates are closed as long as a volunteer does not gain the trust of the locals.

Cultural Resistance and Daily Life

The locals tend to perceive Western volunteers as a threat to their culture. They are portrayed as culturally freer and more open. Freedom and openness are used in a pejorative sense to emphasize exaggerated and unlimited freedom, in opposition to Nepalese culture, where respect and rules are considered necessary because they define and maintain coherence and harmony.

> Prakash: Volunteers come and they try to adopt small children, but it depends on the culture—on the Nepali culture, European culture, US culture. This is really difficult, because they need to give good love to the children, they need proper management.

Interviewer: It's a cultural problem?

> Prakash: One part cultural, meaning the Europeans have never been able to . . . but as for my knowledge, there is more freedom. (Prakash, the director of the orphanage)

Prakash not only sees Westerners as different, but as a kind of threat. As he mentions, "they need to give good love." By good love, Prakash means proper values that are coherent with Nepalese culture. In Nepalese perception, Western society is portrayed as rich and developed, but lacking social and family values. In the hosts' reflections, the volunteers' freedom appears as the *freedom to* or the lack of limits (e.g., to smoke or have sexual relations). That is why locals need to set rules that must be respected to protect children from Western influences, as Prakash explains:

> In our orphanage? No, there are no problems. Some volunteers try to smoke or something, but it's not allowed here! So, they never do it here, but it's their problem, not ours. If they want to go outside someplace, they can; it's different here! (Prakash, the director of the orphanage)

In the same way, a 19-year-old female volunteer in the orphanage reported that she was disappointed by Prakash's attitude because he did not let her stay with her friend's family. Prakash explained that he did not let her go to her friend's house because she was dating the brother of this girl. He said that it was not appropriate for the volunteer to live with her boyfriend, and this would constitute a bad example for the children. These two examples of daily life issues (smoking and romantic relations) show that the integration of volunteers is constantly negotiated and controlled and point to performativity aspects of the relationship (Butler, 2007). To be accepted, Western volunteers have to respect the local culture and behave appropriately. The

limits and negotiations represent a form of resistance helping to reshape the power relationship. Rules come from hosts' agency; they decide what is allowed and what is not. Additionally, locals tend to be skeptical about the contributions and quality of volunteers. Most of the volunteers are young and not highly skilled, and therefore are perceived as of little value to the project: "Sometimes it's difficult, sometimes they have no English. . . . How to help the children?" (Prakash, the director of the orphanage). Prakash denounces young naive Westerners who have an underdocumented vision of Nepal, exaggerating its underdevelopment. However, they can substitute their financial contributions for their lack of knowledge.

Compliance and Trade-offs Between Hosts and Guests

Although there is a lack of trust and an awareness of volunteers' relative uselessness, the sending organizations and even local organizations, orphanages, schools, and host families encourage volunteer tourism. This situation challenges the prevailing discourse of the sector as a pariah (Zahra & McGehee, 2013). The market is sustained because it is also profitable to the locals. While hosts try to protect their culture and resist what they consider to be a Western invasion, they cooperate at the same time and take advantage of this market. Volunteers' financial contributions and English teaching are the main reasons that explain the local population's compliance despite all the shortcomings in the sector.

Volunteers Are Income. Money is a crucial issue in the locals' narrative. Volunteers' help is seen mostly in terms of monetary contributions. Karan, a local host, offers an excellent example:

> Interviewer: What's the advantage of having volunteers here [in your house]?
>
> Karan: My job is this: Bring people to stay here. I'll get some money, and I will manage my home and everything. If not, everything is lost.
>
> Interviewer: Okay, for you it's like an economic.
>
> Karan: Yes, exactly.

Karan is a Nepalese man whose work is hosting volunteers. Each one pays 6,000 to 7,000 NPR per month, which is equivalent to US$65 to $70. Karan sustains his family with the money volunteers pay for the accommodation he provides. Besides, Karan confesses that he asked volunteers to purchase things for him such as a computer, a TV, etc. Karan explained later that his role is to offer a home to volunteers and provide them with all that they need concerning material comfort and assistance. He described how he assists when they are sick or need any help. Volunteers are considered tourists whose needs are to be satisfied. It is worth noting that Karan talked about this openly. He does not see any shame in asking volunteers for money. For him and the other host families in general, if volunteers want to help, an efficient way to do it is through their financial contributions. The relationship between host and guest is based on a capitalist exchange logic: volunteers come to help and get immersed in the local way of life, and hosts provide the "authentic" local experience in exchange for money.

Volunteers as Ambassadors for the Orphanage. Another way to compensate for volunteers' incompetence is to attribute them a new mission. According to Prakash, in the case of an orphanage where at least 25 persons live, the money coming from volunteers covers only food and accommodation. The orphans have more needs, particularly their school fees. That is how Prakash justifies the attribution of a new task to the volunteers who want to help the orphanage. He encourages each volunteer to mobilize his or her social network for fundraising and to become the orphanage's ambassador in their countries. He explains how such engagement is valuable:

> Prakash: I think if the volunteers come directly, they are going out of their way for the orphanage; also, because I'm not running this side [fundraising and updating the website]. They are themselves running this, too. But the important thing is that other people can see that and tell others what we are doing. It's important, so we are giving the volunteers, openly . . . they can directly express their ideas, their knowledge. They can also share the reality of the *hopad* [orphanage]. A second thing, they can also do something for the children.

A volunteer tourism program is an indirect way of fundraising, which may explain previous research findings that residents with access to direct volunteer tourism benefits have a more positive perception of the host–guest relationship (McGehee & Andereck, 2008). Prakash's belief is that international volunteers have to be involved in the orphanage's everyday life to understand how it works and be sure that the money is used correctly, for the children. Then they will be willing to collect money by themselves and in that way help the organization surpass the power of intermediaries. In this case, all the communication and promotion work is led by the volunteers, whose Western competencies are appreciated and used by the locals. Moreover, volunteers' commitment and motivations to help are assessed through their abilities to raise funds and mobilize their social networks. Their dedication to the children's care and daily activities is not as crucial as their capacity to help financially.

Overall, to counter the potential exploitation in the value chain of the volunteer tourism sector, some hosts accept a little money as a monthly contribution from the local organization while involving volunteers in the long term. This constitutes a different form of resistance. In this case, international and national intermediaries (i.e., sending organizations) are resisted and bypassed because hosts build a relatively sustainable relationship with volunteers through word-of-mouth recommendations and therefore are able to access a direct source of income, thereby creating new complex entanglements that do not follow preestablished supply chains. Thus, for some locals, the defining characteristic of a good or a bad volunteer is measured in financial terms—that is, how much money the volunteers can give or fundraise. This becomes a form of instrumentalization in which the volunteer becomes objectified.

Social Ascension Through the Language of the Powerful. Achieving English proficiency is considered an asset, opening opportunities for better employment and access to capital. People fluent in English can work in tourism and many other economic domains. In a caste society like Nepal, the poor, oppressed, and marginalized have little chance to improve their social and economic situation. As explained by Bourdieu (1979), education appears to be a means to overcome the old stratifications through an economic valorization of higher human capital. Padam, another local host, offers a good example:

> It is better to have volunteers, mmm like a little support, and on the other hand, they [his children] are learning English. . . . You know they speak in English, not like normal people, better than they speak. . . . Yeah, better than normal people! (Padam, interview)

In addition to the importance of monetary contribution, Padam's narrative shows how much he is proud of his kids being fluent in English (better than "normal" Nepalese). The English language is portrayed as a symbol that allows access to and possession of social and cultural capital. English is associated with technology, modernization, and jobs in the knowledge economy (Nino-Murcia, 2003). Thus, being fluent in English and being close to the international volunteer community helps locals reach a higher social status in their environment.

Conclusion

This article provides an alternative way to represent the local and host communities in volunteer tourism. Scott's concept of infrapolitics allowed us to go beyond the traditional binary of the host–guest relationship and to challenge the established conceptualization of the entanglements of power. Instead of depicting the host community as victims or passive actors, this study provides evidence of the hosts' agency and how they engage in a dialectical tension between resistance and compliance. The article contributes to the existing literature on host community resistance (Wei et al., 2018), exposing how this is performed in a veiled manner. Unlike the social movements against overtourism, where locals in cities such as Venice and Barcelona are openly rebelling, claiming their cities back and reacting to stop mass tourism (Milano et al., 2019), in this case the resistance is found on an implicit level. Thereby, the article provides new ways of making sense of how power is manifested in tourism relationships.

In the case of volunteer tourism, the host community tends to be a marginalized population in the Global South. They cannot complain about tourists because they represent economic income to survive on. The deal here is much more complex; it

is a question of survival. This study problematizes the research view that suggests that marginalized and subordinated people never resist and usually participate in their own oppression (Allen, 2008; Bauman, 2000). As we showed, the host community often engages in a form of self-orientalism that shows their awareness of being powerless but retaining covert forms of resistance. There is a level of agency exhibited by host communities that keeps them away from being completely compliant with and legitimizing their domination. Thus, this article explores new forms of resistance and power negotiation in the tourist encounter.

Aiming to give voice to the host community instead of talking about them, this research also advocates the importance of the researcher's positionality. It questions the idea that host communities are homogeneous. Although the privilege to seek to understand the other is, in a way, a patronizing act in itself (Rawlins, 2003), such challenge should help us raise key questions, because, "What if we do not ask, do not care, do not try? Where does that leave us?" (Rawlins, p. 120). Seeking to understand how host communities engage and disengage with volunteer tourism means voicing their experiences to the academic literature. Such has been the core aim of this article.

Whether tourism is good or bad for a host community remains a matter of controversy. The key question is how to include local populations in the development of a truly community-based tourism solution without a patronizing gaze and depicting them as victims or mere beneficiaries. This work, while acknowledging some limitations in terms of the extent of the fieldwork and the language barrier, is an attempt to understand the local perspective by challenging the established understanding of a power order that underestimates the agency of hosts in the context of a country like Nepal. As such, it is an invitation to reconsider and rethink how tourism research helps to empower or disempower its objects of study, and how the inclusion of the other helps to cocreate our knowledge field.

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