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Ethics of Hospitality in Non-commercial Homestay Tourism

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Title: Ethics of Hospitality in Non-commercial Homestay Tourism

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Abstract:

The sum of innumerable interpersonal relationships that are created between individuals constitute the foundation of our society (Simmel, 1950), and hospitality has been argued to reinforce these relationships as well as contribute to the formulation of new ones (Selwyn, 2000). In order to establish these connections, it is imperative for the two sides of the exchange to agree upon a common moral framework, according to which they will behave (Selwyn, 2000). This study is exploring a particular type of tourism, characterised by a combination of work, homestay, and cultural exchange (Cox & Narula, 2003), hereafter referred to as non-commercial homestay tourism (NCHT). In this setting, the guest provides work in exchange for food and accommodation, with the most prominent examples being Au-pairing, WWOOFing, Workaway, and HelpX, among others. In NCHT the rules of the exchange are not explicit or written, and the moral framework is negotiated during the time of the transaction. A positive social exchange is crucial for the success of the encounter (Mosedale, 2011), a transaction regulated by the moral economy rather than market forces (Kosnik, 2013), but uncertainty or even disagreement regarding the rules of the exchange can lead to dilemmas, friction, or moments of inhospitality (Rosello, 2001).

The home setting, where this encounter transpires, introduces further complications to the transaction, due to the overlap of the private and public arena in a space which is at the same time home and work. During the stay, the host has to adapt their normal routines and behaviour while maintaining sovereignty of their space. Simultaneously, the guest has to forego their freedom, follow the home's rules and abide by its constraints (Lynch, Di Domenico, & Sweeney, 2007). This situation creates the necessity for a negotiation of spatial and emotional boundaries, while acts of mutuality and compromise during this negotiation can build intimacy between the two parties (Bialski, 2011).

While tourism literature has explored the relationship between the host and the guest on a macro level, namely the host community and the tourists, on a micro level, the existing literature is limited. Encounter is in the core of tourism (Crouch et al., 2001), and a micro-analysis of these encounters is crucial (Gibson, 2010). Understanding the ethics involved in creating and solidifying this interpersonal relationship can provide a significant insight into the role hospitality can play in strengthening human relations. Encounters in the home have been viewed from the perspective of commercial homestays (Lynch, 2005; Sweeney & Lynch, 2009) and more personal transactions, like Couchsurfing (Germann Molz, 2011; Bialski, 2011). However, in this context, where the provision of work in exchange for hospitality regulates the transaction and its consequent unclear rules, research is limited, focusing on other aspects of the exchange and not elicited through a micro-ethical lens. This paper explores the way this common moral framework is created and negotiated between the two sides of the transaction in NCHT, by examining the micro-ethics informing the relationship. It is based on ongoing PhD research, which is going to employ a combination of an autoethnographic account and semi-structured interviews with both guests and hosts in this setting. The presentation will be based on a critical review of the literature, an outline of the methods used, and the preliminary findings of the

fieldwork.¹

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¹The presentation will be infused with emergent findings, but as the fieldwork will be undertaken in early 2017, they cannot be described at the time of writing.