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A "Token of Love": the role of emotions in student field trips teaching critical development geographies

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the roles and relationships of emotions in the promotion of critical development geographies, as engendered through a student field trip from a university in the so-called Global North to a country in the so-called Global South. Through a case-study involving a field trip led by the authors taking Masters students from the UK to Nepal, we find that emotions are integral to the pedagogical process and critical political potential of the trip. We show how emotions are central to the connections students create with people and places during the trip, and to their learning within it, particularly around questions of positionality, privilege and power. We highlight crucial emotions of curiosity and care, demonstrating however that these do not emerge out of nowhere, but rather can be deliberately cultivated by reflective pedagogies and practices. We argue that when conducted sensitively; involving reflective pedagogies and close collaborations, field trips to the so-called Global South can promote critical learning on questions of global justice, that are in line with demands to decolonize academia, geography and development geographies specifically.

Introduction

> Emotions are fundamental to the ways we comprehend the world and to our experiences of it (Wright, 2012, p. 1114)

In this paper we explore the role of emotions in students' experiences of the world, as mediated through university field trips teaching critical development geographies. Fieldwork is a central component of teaching and learning in geography, providing opportunities for developing students' deeper awareness of geographical issues through new experiences and encounters with place (Marvell & Simm, 2018; Philips & Johns, 2012; Robson et al., 2013). However, the simple act of taking students into "the field" is no guarantee of effective learning or engagement (Fuller et al., 2006), and without actively engaging and challenging students intellectually, student field trips can have the perverse effect of reinforcing existing ideological distortions (Nairn, 2005). These concerns are particularly salient where field courses involve travel to the Global South, as Abbott

(2006, p. 337) notes: "Unless we engender a discourse on the invisibility of privilege, differences of race and racial histories, differences between the power of the past rulers and the continuing dependency of the postcolonial economy, we are in danger of replicating the geographical traditions of imperial exploration". Such concerns sit within increasing demands to decolonize academia broadly and specifically geography, i.e. to fight against "the reproduction of colonial power structures and Eurocentric logics ... whereby the realities of the global majority are determined by few powerful institutions and a global elite" (Sultana, 2019, p. 31; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Cupples & Grosfugel, 2018; Noxolo, 2017).

Recent writings on the pedagogy of field trips have emphasized affective learning as "a powerful way to strengthen students" appreciation of human geography's concepts and interrogate their positionality' (Golubchikov, 2015, p. 143). Immersion in the messiness of the field can provoke a range of emotional responses, influenced not only by individual positionalities and privilege (Hankins & Yarbrough, 2009; Pierce & Widen, 2017) but also by group dynamics (Marvell & Simm, 2018). Field trips' teaching strategies therefore need to be sensitive to the differential emotional experiences of students while simultaneously encouraging them to deconstruct their cultural expectations, previous knowledge and positionality.

In this paper we explore the role of emotions in student field trips, drawing on a case-study involving postgraduate students from a University in the so-called Global North (the UK) travelling to the so-called Global South[1] (Nepal). We are interested in exploring the role emotions play in connecting students to people and places in order to enhance their learning experience, highlighting the work that critical (self)reflection on emotions does in promoting critical imaginaries that might lead to de-centred, plural and transformatory global futures.

Background

Emotions as integral to critical development geographies

"Development", as a process of direct intervention, has a long and chequered history; evolving from colonialism, imperialism and slavery, and currently manifested through globalisation and neoliberalism. Critiques of "mainstream" development have been made for decades by feminist, indigenous, critical, postcolonial, and post-development scholars; who view development as fundamentally about Western domination (Escobar, 2012; Ferguson, 1994; Kabeer, 1994; Kothari et al., 2019; Li, 2007). Teaching development geographies, particularly from a Western institution, thus entails engaging students in discussions of power and privilege, and a praxis of critical self-reflection (Pailey, 2019; Sultana, 2019). We view student field trips as an opportunity to do just this; as is increasingly practiced within mainstream development itself (Eyben, 2014; Fechter, 2012; Fine, 2019). Emotions matter in this reflective process because of their relationality i.e. their capacity to circulate, to create connections (or disconnects) between people, places and processes (Ahmed 2004; Wright, 2012). Emotions such as hope, despair, confidence, defiance, are seen as central to development, capable of producing both regressive racist politics but also progressive ethics of care (Wright, 2012). It is this connective capacity that we are interested in exploring with regards student field trips, and the intersection of emotions and reflexivity in teaching critical development geographies.

Emotions, positionality and group dynamics

Reflecting the "emotional turn" in geography, Marvell and Simm (2018) argue that emotions are an intrinsic part of fieldwork and that teaching and learning strategies should evolve to include more explicit engagement with emotions as an integral part of our understandings and perceptions of place. Field trips' teaching strategies need to be sensitive to the differential emotional experiences of students (Pierce & Widen, 2017) while simultaneously encouraging them to deconstruct their cultural expectations, previous knowledge and positionality (Golubchikov, 2015). Positionality is recognized as "one of the most important elements of pedagogy for social transformation" (Golubchikov, 2015, p. 151), creating opportunities to reflect on privilege, to think across difference and similarity, and thus to develop more "critical imaginaries" (Hankins & Yarbrough, 2009). Positionality refers to our socioeconomic, gendered, cultural, geographic, historical and institutional positioning, and is viewed by development scholar Spivak (1988) as creating "baggage" for those engaging in development. Travelling as a group to the Global South whilst on a university field trip provides opportunity to reflect on the "baggage" carried by students both individually and institutionally. University field trips require that students spend time with their peers, academic staff and collaborators, whilst traveling together, eating together, spending spare time together, possibly working and researching in groups, and, ultimately, learning together (Philips & Johns, 2012). Even if ultimately experienced individually, events and emotions are shared, and students' experiences are mediated by the collective.

Field trips are unique spaces through which students can become increasingly aware of their positionality, perhaps for the first time, creating opportunities to experiment with reflexivity. This may occur by directly engaging with those who are usually "presented as abstract distanciated objects of learning and study" (Bhakta et al., 2015, p. 282), but also through an experience of shared learning with peers and teaching staff, whose backgrounds and positionality can be highly diverse. As Streule and Craig (2016) emphasize, field learning plays an important role in shaping students' individual as well as collective identities, as they develop a sense of belonging to larger groups or communities. In a group setting, critical reflection and issues of how to interact ethically with others while in the field arise more easily (Philips & Johns, 2012). Teaching staff and local partner institutions and collaborators act as gatekeepers while forging new relationships with the students, and thus their positionalities and the potential influence they might exercise over students' learning, emotions and appreciation of the context should also be taken into account (Pierce & Widen, 2017). Acknowledging that "group dynamics may influence an emotional response and ultimately emotional responses will shape group dynamics" (Marvell & Simm, 2018, p. 517), we reflect on the implications for students' critical learning of development geographies, positionality and power.

Emotions and student expectations in the neoliberal academy

Working with and through emotions on student field trips requires us to view the relatively short trip as being just one, potentially pivotal, moment in a student's long educational career. If positionalities are to be challenged through a carefully designed field trip, we first need to reflect on how these have been formed, and students' experiences of learning and assessment pre-field trip. Neoliberal processes at Westernized universities have been widely

discussed including their influence on students' views of the purpose of a university education as a place solely for training future workers (Cupples and Grosfoguel 2018; Giroux, 2009; Mitchell, 2004; Raaper, 2019). Van Milders (2018, p. 49) argues that the commodification of education leads students to perceive education as being about consuming knowledge to get a job to pay off debt. A "good" education is therefore one that is a good return on investment, and this implicates field trips in the programmes under consideration by these "rational consumers" (Raaper, 2019). Field trips sit in a strange position of tension, as they are often highlighted in marketing materials as a "selling-point" for a degree programme (Abbott, 2006; Fuller et al., 2006) and are central to competition between departments for students (McGuinness & Simm, 2005), yet could also offer an opportunity to challenge Eurocentric epistemologies and shape students' subjectivities and identities as critical citizens.

In a 2015 letter to The Guardian, a group of 126 academics argued that "government regulations and managerial micro-management was creating high levels of anxiety in UK universities, with 'obedient' students expecting, and even demanding, hoop-jumping, box-ticking and bean counting, often terrified by anything new, different, or difficult" (The Guardian, 2015). The professionalisation of assessment has led to anonymized marking and use of detailed criteria and rubrics (Raaper, 2019), with students coming to expect such details and directions as normal practice. Field trips however often include an element of self-reflection on learning through a journal, blog or essay (Golubchikov, 2015; Marvell & Simm, 2018), and a lack of familiarity with such assessment can lead to apprehension and discomfort amongst students, and create animosity towards learning on the trip (McGuinness and Simm 2005; Glass, 2015).

Despite the challenging position of field trips within the neoliberal university, they are seen as vital in promoting one of the most important academic values, that of curiosity (Philips & Johns, 2012). Curiosity-driven fieldwork in geography is evidenced through emotions such as "enchantment", "wonder" and "childlike excitement", and Lai (2000) regards such emotions as "inseparable parts of fieldwork learning" (as cited in Philips & Johns, 2012, p. 190). Bondi (2005) argues that emotions should be embraced, interrogated and directed, whilst Pierce and Widen (2017) argue that teachers who can anticipate and engage with their students' emotional experiences, will be better placed to help them achieve learning objectives. The intellectual and political significance of curiosity-driven fieldwork is substantial, and we are interested here in its ability to foster learning in critical development geographies.

Putting emotions to work

In this paper, we explore the work done by emotions in student field trips in teaching/learning critical development geographies. We consider the relationships emotions help to establish between students and the people and places they visit, which serve (potentially) to promote connections and an "ethics of care" (Askins & Blazek, 2017). We contemplate the importance of emotions in creating curiosity towards, and critical imaginaries of, progressive global development futures. Finally, we seek to understand the ways in which the collective and collaborative nature of field trips and their emotional relations shapes the pedagogical experience.

Methodology

Case study field trip to Nepal

This paper reports on a two-week postgraduate field trip to Nepal in April 2019, with students from the Masters in Environment and Development at the University of Edinburgh (UoE), UK. The trip involved 29 students and was led by two UoE lecturers and three UoE PhD students – these five teachers are the co-authors of this paper. The field trip formed a compulsory part of the Masters programme and aimed to provide students with a greater understanding of practices, processes and politics related to issues of environment and development "in the real world".[2] Prior to the field trip, the students had attended a series of 10 sessions introducing them to Nepal, including its geography, history, culture, politics and contested environment and development challenges. These sessions also involved teaching the students basic Nepali language, introducing them to a range of social science research methodologies, and discussions of ethics and positionality. Critical development geographies and questions of positionality, power and privilege were taught in-depth during other core courses taken by the students.

The field trip was facilitated by the Southasia Institute of Advanced Studies (SIAS)[3] with the support of five Nepali Masters students hired by SIAS. SIAS and their staff had previously worked with the UoE and with some of the field trip teachers, and the planning of academic activities during the field trip was done collaboratively, drawing on SIAS' extensive expertise and networks. Student activities during the first week of the trip involved attending lectures and site visits hosted by a range of environment and development actors from government, development agencies, NGOs, grassroots organisations, research institutions, and local communities, in the Kathmandu valley and nearby municipalities. Issues discussed included water management, community forestry, adaptation to climate change, disaster management, biodiversity conservation, and gender. Based on these interactions and insights, during the second week of the trip student activities involved the design and conducting of small group research projects, working closely and collaboratively with the Nepali Masters students, SIAS staff and UoE teachers.

Student assessment for the field trip involved a group presentation on the research projects, given on the last day of the trip to SIAS and UoE teachers. Assessment also involved an individual reflective diary, to be submitted a week after the trip ended, containing extracts of field notes and images, critical self-reflection on their learning experience, and reference to academic scholarship. In order to promote critical self-reflection amongst students, the UoE teachers facilitated student discussions each evening during the first week of the trip, sometimes as the whole group and sometimes in smaller groups. The Nepali Masters students and SIAS staff were not part of these evening reflections, partly as they returned to their homes while all UoE students and staff stayed in a hotel, and partly to enable students to reflect also about their relationships with our Nepali collaborators. As will become clear, these evening discussions were hugely important in providing students a safe space in which to reflect upon and question their own positionalities, privileges and concerns.

Methods in our research

The research material for this paper was gathered through a range of data; first, an anonymous student survey completed before the field trip (referred to as "S" in the data below, plus survey number); second, participant observation by all five co-authors (i.e. the UoE teachers) during the trip (referred to as "PO" in the data below, along with the author initials); and third, the students' reflective diaries submitted as part of their assessment after the trip (referred to as "RD" in the data below, along with student pseudonym for anonymity). Of the 29 students attending the field trip, 22 agreed to take part in our research, having been introduced to the purpose and conditions of participation before the trip. The researchers had explicitly and repeatedly stated that student participation was voluntary and that their decision on participation did not impact how the course was run or how their work was assessed. The research received approval from the School of GeoSciences Ethics & Integrity Committee, and all students involved in the study gave full free and prior informed consent to participate. Students are acknowledged as a cohort and a final draft of this paper was sent to and reviewed by the student cohort before publication.

The students who took part in the research are a diverse group from Europe, North America, South America, Africa and Asia. They represent diverse educational backgrounds, ranging from geography and political science, to engineering and psychology. Most students had spent time living away from "home" and their families, including for study, work, volunteering and travel. Many from the Global North had travelled to the Global South, although notably not all; whilst for some from the Global South, the UK was their first destination away from home and the trip to Nepal was their first time to another country in the Global South. Most students were in their 20s, although a few were a little older; there was a mix of women and men. The diversity of students, in terms of nationality, experience, and undergraduate study was important to our research, and was captured to some extent in our short pre-trip survey, which asked demographic questions. The survey also asked students about their expectations of the trip, although it should be noted that only half of the 22 students taking part in the research completed the pre-trip survey, so whilst it was interesting it was sadly incomplete, and thus contributes to only a small part of the findings shared in this paper. We deliberately do not give exact demographic details of the students either here or in the papers' findings, in order to maintain anonymity.

Participant observation by the co-authors of this paper was an important part of our research. The researchers and the students spent most of the time together on the trip, except for one day off and the day students conducted data collection for their group projects. The participant observation took place in both formal and informal settings, including during talks and field site visits, during evening reflections, and break times. Co-authors took their own observational notes and shared insights from these only after the field trip had ended. The most revealing source of data for our research were the assessed reflective diaries which were first marked by the two UoE lecturers, and only afterwards were read by all co-authors for the purpose of this research. All three sources of data were analysed according to three themes which emerged during our review of literature and our own reflections on their connections to emotions during the fieldtrip.

All data were manually coded using these three themes, which we use to structure our findings below: connection and care; curiosity and critical imaginaries; and collective learning and collaboration.

A key challenge of educational ethnography is its precarious nature of negotiating a researcher role (Walford, 2009), especially in short term participant observation (Brockmann, 2011). The researchers were also the field trip teachers, and we sought to negotiate mutual expectations of the research purpose and conditions, recognizing this to reflect students' backgrounds and their perceptions of power relationships between the researcher/teacher and the student (Delamont, 2004). While observing the role of emotions in the student learning process, the researcher can also affect students' emotions. The researchers have different histories of engagement with Nepal and research in the Nepali context, thus bringing different emotional experiences to interactions during the trip. We however take this ethnographic work as part of a mutual learning process (Blommaert & Jie, 2020), which enables reflections on positionality to take place and travel between the researchers/teachers and the students during the field trip.

Findings

Connection and care

In this section we reflect on how students' emotional experiences helped and, in some cases, hindered their ability to build connections with different people and places. We explore how these connections led to care, and the associated ethical dilemmas of "giving back".

Confronting positionality

In encountering "the field" the students were confronted, some for the first time, with the challenge of interrogating and contending with their position as an "outsider" and the influence this has on their experiences of and relationship to the field. Emotions were integral to this process, and evening group reflections helped students in working through their feelings, including "ambivalences, discomfort, tensions and instabilities of subjective positions" (Sultana, 2007, p. 377). While the concept of positionality was introduced and discussed as an explicit part of the pre-trip sessions, for many it only gained personal salience through the trip:

> The idea of positionality is something I had never encountered until I started on this course. [...] While previously I had grappled with exactly what this means and how this impacts research and fieldwork, during this trip I was able to really see its importance and how it impacts both learning and research processes (Paula, RD)

For others, the trip contributed to on-going self-reflection and emotional labour spent on questions of identity, "*[the experience] uncovered more subtle elements of my positionality and encouraged me to reflect on the aspects of my identity that I have struggled with for years, while simultaneously offering validation*" (Anita, RD).

Confronting positionality for some students involved feelings of fear; fear of the reproduction of "extractive" North-South power dynamics (Aislinn and Michelle, RD), which made them "self-policing" (Catherine, RD) in their interactions, "*shutting*

[themselves] off from experiences and learning" (Rachel, RD) to avoid the awkwardness or discomfort they felt. However, in time, they appreciated what Sultana (2007) explains, that such fears and "impasse" can be overcome by undertaking "research that is more politically engaged, materially grounded, and institutionally sensitive" (p. 375). The overcoming of negative emotions and any perceived "impasses" came, at least in part, through the relationships students built with people and places in Nepal.

Creating connections

Along with exploring opportunities to apply knowledge and skills beyond the "narrow confines of the lecture theatre" (Dummer et al., 2008, p. 459), the students on the trip almost universally expressed a desire in their pre-trip surveys to develop a "deeper connection" with Nepal and its people, to experience Kathmandu and its surroundings as more than a casual visitor or traveller (S 4, 8). For many this deeper connection was realized once they were able to move beyond discourses and assumptions of difference, or people and things being "other", and instead became attentive to the similarities that lay beneath superficial differences. As one student put it "*[t]he most memorable moments from the trip for me were where my notion of 'us and them' was broken down*" (Michelle, RD).

This closer connection to Nepal was most acutely reflected in the students' increasingly convivial relationships with our Nepali collaborators and research partners. Some students were surprised to find that they had so much in common with the Nepali students we worked with, for example, based on education, academic interests and upbringing. The students expressed their appreciation not just for the practical support that the Nepali students and SIAS staff provided through, for example, translating interviews or negotiating access to research sites, but also for the connections and bonds of friendship that were formed in the process. One student confessed "*I felt more connected to some people we met and the staff from SIAS as well as the Nepali Masters students than I do to some people from my hometown*" (Hanna, RD). These individuals thus formed crucial bridges between the students and "the field", and through feelings of friendship, connections were created based on shared interests and values; connections which have extended beyond the trip and continue into the future.

Cultivating care

The relationality of emotions, and their ability to connect (cf. Wright, 2012), is further demonstrated by the students' desire to express their care for those we engaged with in Nepal. Students perceived the field trip as a potentially extractive process in which they had much to gain but very little to offer in return; as such they embodied concerns for an "ethics of care" in academia (Askins and Blazek, 2018), and the fundamental ethical tenant in fieldwork to "give back" (Staddon, 2014). This perception was itself intimately bound up with students' insecurities about their (lack of) expertise as much as it was rooted in critiques of colonial power dynamics, with the students feeling "unequipped" and lacking the "professional expertise" or "technical knowledge" (Kaitlin and Stefan, RD) necessary to engage in a more equitable knowledge exchange. Given these imbalances the students found it challenging to imagine being able to reciprocate in any meaningful way.

Overcoming the discomfort and "mild panic" (Catherine, RD) the students felt when considering matters of reciprocity, required them to expand their preconceptions of what it is that *can* be "given back" in the context of a relatively short field trip:

> I have learnt that 'giving back' can occur in many ways, it is not simply an exchange of knowledge. Creating an arena for open dialogue, building rapport and lasting relationships is also a way to 'give back' (Kaitlin, RD)

These new ways of framing reciprocity in field trips also fed into the students' understandings of prevailing power dynamics in knowledge production and how they might be challenged. Such critical understandings emerged from experiencing first-hand and confronting their positionality as privileged, and then moving beyond that through the relationships built during the field trip, as discussed above. Emotions were an integral part of this process, including feelings of fear, friendship and care.

Curiosity and critical imaginaries

This section focuses firstly on our evidence of curiosity as a salient emotion and action which can potentially support students' transformative learning through moments of critical reflection. We then reflect on whether the fieldtrip stimulated students' political agency, even though it is positioned within the confines of a neoliberal education system.

Learning to be curious

During the field trip, curiosity was seen by students as a positive trait, and one which should be learnt and performed through asking questions, and hearing others ask questions. One student reflected, *"The two crucial lessons I've learnt on the trip with regards to conducting fieldwork are the importance of listening for what people don't say, and how to frame a question"* (Rachel, RD), which another student linked to the nature of the field trip; *"The field has allowed me to be curious about the delivery of information, to be aware of who is providing information, and whom it represents"* (Reece, RD). A number of students reflected that, initially, it was the same students asking questions as in the classroom, and that these tended to follow what one student called 'the usual 'framework", based on theories learnt in the classroom (Catherine, RD). One student shared that it would take courage to ask a question out of curiosity which did not fit with this widely acceptable "usual framework". What was considered "acceptable" seemed to expand over the course of the trip however, with quieter students increasingly feeling confident enough to ask questions which broadened the topics discussed, and questions were increasingly prefaced with "I'm just curious . . . " (PO, CB).

We do not equate curiosity with asking questions, rather we align with Macfarlane (2014) in recognizing how private curiosity is publicly performed through asking questions, and see student emotions and confidence as interwoven with this performativity. Some students wrote of their pride in hearing quieter classmates ask questions, again highlighting the relationality of emotions (Ahmed 2004) and how they (in this case, pride) help to strengthen connections. The group research projects revealed how curiosity, emotion and commitment to learning are interwoven and reinforce each other. One student reflected that " ... *it was our strong emotions to learn about the waste management system in Kathmandu, and to do our best to complete this research [that] enabled us to overcome all the difficulties"* (Kay, RD). The curiosity of the students was

noted by SIAS staff who shared how impressed they were with the students' questions, and their ability to re-frame those questions and their responses, to continue the conversation until they fully understood (PO, SS).

Our analysis has revealed the key position of reflective assessments and pedagogy in encouraging curiosity and allowing emotions to come to bear on students' learning journeys. Through assessing reflections, students were encouraged to engage on a daily basis with both collective and personal reflections on their learning and emotions, in line with recommendations for experiential and transformative learning (Eyben, 2014; Golubchikov, 2015). However, we did see evidence of a lack of familiarity with reflective assessments which, as also reported by McGuinness and Simm (2005) and Glass (2015), created anxiety in some students. Students generally recognized the value of reflection, whilst also hoping for more defined marking criteria. One student wrote, *"I've grown so used to assessment of a 'finished' product . . . that I feel incapable of reflecting . . . but I can unlearn this. I just need to allow myself time to wade through the chaos, to sit and be, both comfortable and uncomfortable, with my disordered thoughts"* (Aislinn, RD).

From curiosity to critical imaginaries

Curiosity, was often expressed through emotions, with one student sharing that, *"Our encounters in the slum and many of the other experiences throughout the trip were not always easy to digest and at times, overstretched the boundaries of my comfort zone, they were also incredibly insightful and helped me to reflect on my privilege, the impact of my positionality and the resulting obligations that are placed upon me throughout the research process"* (Stefan, RD). Nuanced and emotional reflections emerged around engaging in development geographies (Yasmin and Mira, RD), with many recognizing how their understandings of privilege changed throughout the course of the field trip as assumptions of agency, or a lack thereof, were tangibly challenged by interactions in Kathmandu.

So we can now ask ourselves whether the field trip has supported the students in becoming critical development scholars and practitioners: does it occupy a place of resistance to Eurocentrism (Cupples & Grosfugel, 2018) through contributing to calls for decolonizing and reflecting on race and privilege in development (Pailey, 2019)? A common, unprompted, discussion point at the evening reflections was how to make a difference and leave a positive impression. As discussed above, as the trip progressed, what was understood as "making a difference" shifted from providing knowledge or doing something to help, towards a more transformative learning process focussed on students themselves (rather than Kathmandu or "locals"), through which they can later influence the world. This was expressed by one student, *"my activism within the world of research can be achieved gradually, once relationships and trust are built. When I have a better understanding"* (Aislinn, RD). The trip also promoted positive emotions, including forms of "critical hope" (Sultana, 2019), through helping one student to reflect on the kind of professional they wanted to be: one which gives agency to communities (Jack, RD). For another, it *"helped me to feel positive about the world again, at least in some small way. I was able to hear from people who were working on the ground and who do care and who are trying to make a difference"* (Paula, RD).

We argue that these examples show that the field trip influenced students' critical imagining of development praxis, whilst recognizing such influences also come from many sources beyond the field trip. Paying attention to the importance of time, we see that there was no one universal moment on the trip which created this critical imagining, rather we join Bhakta et al. (2015) in seeing evidence of transformative learning in the students' own words, emerging through interactions as a student group and with partners and speakers in Nepal, and through being comfortable with expressing, questioning, and reflecting on their emotions.

Collective learning and collaboration

In this section we analyse the field trip as a collective experience produced by interactions between students, teachers and collaborators and shaped by individual and collective emotions. The experiences of the collective that emerged from student accounts and reflections are varied and highlight how emotions were interwoven into considerations of positionality, communication, the spaces in which collective activities took place, and also time spent alone.

Travelling and learning together

Whilst not everyone on the trip was always all together, there's no denying we were a large group. This was considered by some students as a cumbersome identity to carry around, and students noted in the pre-trip survey their concerns around being part of such a large group of foreigners (S 1, 4). Associated with images normally projected by guided tours, students initially feared that it may act as an obstacle to "genuine" experiences and interactions with Nepali people; "*There is something about a big bus of people arriving which is reminiscent of a tourist group observing 'the locals'*" (S 1). The group is perceived simultaneously as a space and an entity, endowed with its own positionality and with an ambivalent nature. A site of reciprocal learning, mutual questioning and shared enthusiasm, the group was also where students found comfort and a space for reflection, as suggested by one student's reflective diaries; "*A key element of being 'in the field' was the collective experience we had together as a course*" (Rachel, RD). Hearing other people's questions after a presentation or a field visit, or during the evening reflection sessions, provided them with the chance to see Nepal and the issues at hand through other people's eyes, and thus to gain new perspectives. This shift from emotions of concern to those of comfort, took place as the trip developed over time.

By being together as part of a large group, students were able to learn about their own positionality, through comparisons, reflections prompted by observing or discussing with others, or by reflecting on the way they had been welcomed and their trip had been arranged by SIAS staff. Some students, however, suggested they felt as if there were expectations for them to behave according to what others perceived their positionality to be; as if by having grown up in a certain region of the world for instance, they were bound to act in a particular way (PO, JL). This highlights a dimension of performativity of positionality, particularly in a group learning setting, a performance mediated through emotions.

Time together – and apart

We spent a lot of the time together – we travelled together, we ate together, we slept in the same hotel, and of course we spent the days together hearing from speakers and visiting sites. At times this collective endeavour was enjoyable and brought people together; at other times however, some students sought to find time to spend alone, to collect their personal thoughts and to rest. Group evening reflections were not experienced analogously by everyone, as some found the task of sharing personal considerations a difficult, emotional experience; "*For me, being asked at short notice to reflect on my feelings in front of a room of thirty plus people is honestly something of nightmarish proportions*" (Paula, RD).

Prior to leaving for Nepal, students had expressed concern about how much they could "learn about Nepal" in such a short time (PO, SS). On arriving in Kathmandu however, students seemed to quickly grasp what an intense experience a field trip is. For some this intensity manifested in the need to speak in English for the entire two weeks of the trip, which was a linguistic challenge and emotional labour for those whose first language is not English (who in the UK would spend more time speaking their native language) (PO, SS). For others, as mentioned above, they sought space and time to be alone, particularly during "time off". In the pre-trip survey, one student shared "*from my past experience at travelling, the best times where I have learnt the most were the unplanned times and when I was on my own as that allowed me to integrate with others much more easily and be in more informal situations*" (S 4). Such feelings support the argument of Philips and Johns (2012) who warn academics against "overly-organizing" trips, and students of "professors who keep you too busy on fieldtrips!" (p. 191). The value of "informal" time and spaces is beautifully illustrated in our field trip through the enthusiastic and emotional response of one student, who on returning from their afternoon "off" exclaimed "*today is the day I fell in love with Kathmandu!*" (PO, SS).

Communicating and collaborating

Students also expressed concerns before the field trip about communication in Nepal, primarily around language barriers (S 2, 8). Although the students had been taught some basic Nepali language in the on-campus pre-trip sessions, by a Nepali living in Edinburgh, students clearly recognized the limited nature of this; "*I think my inability to fluently speak Nepali may challenge my experience because it may not allow nuance in conversations with locals or other Nepali individuals who may not be fluent in English, and myself*" (S 11). On the first day of the trip, we had a "Welcoming Ceremony" to meet our SIAS collaborators and Nepali students, and all UoE students and staff introduced themselves in Nepali. Some people were more hesitant in doing this than others, but it was an important symbolic act, conveying the intention of those in the UK to learn about Nepal (including its major language) in advance of the trip, but also in feeling humble – none of the students were able to go beyond the basics of saying their name and where they are from, reinforcing the limits of their knowledge (PO, SS). All SIAS staff and Nepali students spoke fluent English, and were able to translate for UoE students and staff whenever needed. During the small-group research projects, the importance of thinking beyond language alone emerged, as students reflected on how the Nepali students were able to build rapport and trust with members of the public or more elite actors (PO, SS).

In line with Nepali customs, we held a formal "Closing Ceremony" on the last day of the trip, during which, everyone involved took it in turns to share reflections on the trip. Given the intensity of the trip, not just in terms of activities done but also relationships built and learning generated, the event was an emotional one for everyone. A range of emotions were expressed; one student reflected on their visit to a "slum" for their research project, sharing how this was both the best day, for connecting to Nepalis, but also the most "heart-breaking" to see their living conditions (PO, SS). Other students shared their thanks to our Nepali "*friends, for everyday taking care of us*", whilst others spoke of how "grateful" they were to have been a part of the trip, and to have learnt from Nepalis' "kindness" (PO, SS). The ultimate demonstration of the importance of emotions to development geographies and academic fieldwork was a gift given at the end of the ceremony from SIAS to all at the UoE – a statue of a temple with a plaque saying from SIAS to UoE as a "Token Of Love".

Conclusions

This paper sought to explore the roles and relationships of emotions in the promotion of critical development geographies, as engendered through an international field trip. Through a case-study involving a field trip led by the authors of this paper taking Masters students from the UK to Nepal, we have shown how emotions, including curiosity and care, are integral to the learning process. We have documented how the field trip encouraged critical self-reflection on questions of positionality, privilege and power, thus we concur with previous scholarship in this area, that international field trips are an important part of geography higher education (Marvell & Simm, 2018; Robson et al., 2013). We show that when conducted sensitively; involving reflective pedagogies and close collaborations, such trips can promote critical learning on questions of global justice (Abbott, 2006; Nairn, 2005).

Emotions matter not only in higher education and geographical fieldwork (Golubchikov, 2015; Marvell & Simm, 2018; Pierce & Widen, 2017) but also within development (Wright, 2012). Ahmed (2004) argues that it is the relational aspect of emotions that make them so significant, given their ability to circulate and create connections. We find ample evidence of the relationality of emotions in the ways in which the students found and expressed connections between themselves, the people and places we engaged with, involving a range of emotions, including pity, fear, confusion, excitement, joy, and surprise. For students, such emotions raised questions of positionality and privilege, leading many to wish to "give back" (Staddon, 2014) and reciprocate for their own learning experience, articulating an "ethics of care" (Askins & Blazek, 2017). Whilst many scholars have argued for greater attention to positionality in pedagogy for social transformation (e.g. Golubchikov, 2015), our experience stresses the importance of deep and directed reflection as an important step between curiosity around positionality and privilege, and the furthering of critical imaginaries and support of politically engaged citizenship based on an ethics of care. By promoting a reflective pedagogy, involving structured daily opportunities for collective reflection during the trip, and coursework which demanded individual self-reflection during and after the trip, emotional relationships and responses to the trip were constructively channelled into critical learning. In line with revolutionary educational theorist Paulo Freire (1970), we

see huge potential in the practice of reflective learning, specifically in relation to development (Eyben, 2014) and to increasing calls to decolonize development and development education (Pailey, 2019; Sultana, 2019).

Students' emotions shifted during the course of the trip, creating an increasing sense of not only ease but also enthusiasm and engagement. Emotions also had a spatial dimension, with certain spaces encountered during the trip provoking strong emotions, for example, the "slum" visited by some students created anxiety over what they might find there. Other "everyday" spaces, such as the buses in which we travelled and the hotel in which we stayed, seemed to imbue a sense of normality and calm, and were where many reflective discussions took place, both during structured evening discussions and more spontaneous chats between students. We have not dealt directly with these spatial and temporal dimensions of emotions and learning in this paper, but they deserve much greater attention (Pierce & Widen, 2017). Considering time and space pushes us to ask questions about what came *before* the trip, not least in terms of what (and how) the students have studied prior to it, and the places they have been in and experiences they have had. The field trip is but one brief moment in time, and whilst potentially hugely influential, is experienced in relation to students' previous learning and life experience – for some this can help in making the most of the trip, whilst for others it can be limiting. Whilst not explored fully here, we believe that the teaching students received on positionality and privilege, on curiosity-driven and critical development studies, and on Nepal and Nepali language during earlier courses in their Masters created expectations of, and conditions for, constructive engagement in self-reflection during the trip. Had the students not shared in that learning as a cohort before embarking on the trip, we believe it might have had quite different outcomes. Field trips must therefore not be seen as isolated moments or spaces, disconnected from the wider higher educational experience.

Fieldtrips must also not be separated from the relationships and collaborations which are at the heart of making them what they are. The fieldtrip we describe here came about only because of the connections – through prior and on-going research – of a number of the authors; and these connections in turn arose from relationships with other researchers in the past. The emotional labour of individual academics (and collaborators) involved in sustaining these relationships is typically not formally recognized in their workloads, yet it is fundamental to successful collaborations on teaching initiatives such as fieldtrips – and particularly so when the trip involves international travel. The strength of relationships between SIAS and UoE is demonstrated by the ability to shift the subsequent year's field trip to an online, remote "Nepal Experience" within a 6-week period in response to the COVID pandemic (see Staddon, 2020). It was also down to our collaborators and existing relationships in Nepal that the field trip was able to bring together such a knowledgeable range of Nepali experts for the students to engage with. These speakers inspired the students to ask questions and be more curious about Nepal, and as this paper demonstrates, curiosity-driven fieldwork (Philips & Johns, 2012) has political potential, which we saw evidence of in the form of "critical imaginaries" developing in the students (Golubchikov, 2015). Students learnt to see field trips not as inherently imperial or exploitative, but as opportunities to reflect on self and experience efforts to decolonize academia. As such, we must resist attempts to generalize fieldtrips, and instead seek to understand *how* they might be conducted in more transformatory

ways (for all involved), and to work to articulate their value beyond narrow measures of the economic success of participating graduates in their future careers. This is increasingly significant given important debates around university travel in light of the climate emergency. Students on the field trip were rightly concerned about the carbon emissions associated with our travel and the social and environmental injustices wrought by the climate emergency and our part in that. There is no easy way to weigh up the costs and benefits of a fieldtrip involving nearly 30 people taking long-haul flights for a short trip, but we remain hopeful that the critical imaginaries established in our students through the trip, and their attention to privilege and power, will contribute, ultimately, to more just and transformatory global futures. Evidence for the basis of our hope can be found in the inspiring work already emerging from this student cohort (Dickens & Nash, 2020).

There are many things that this paper has *not* done. We have not considered many of the challenges of the trip, such as the apprehension some students showed when faced with relatively (but intentionally) unstructured activities and new forms of assessment (McGuiness and Simm 2005). Despite our close relationship, we have not co-authored this paper with our Nepali collaborators, as Bhakta et al. (2015) usefully did – rather we reflect on their importance as perceived by our students and ourselves. We have also chosen not to write directly with the students involved in the trip – rather we represent them through their coursework and our own participant observations. These are conscious decisions, however we would love to write such papers in the future; exploring with our collaborators the importance of collaboration not just for university fieldtrips but also for the collaborators, and writing with our graduates when they are working in the world of development to explore the relevance of the fieldtrip in their praxis. Yet another paper might usefully focus on our emotions as teachers, which have not been broached in this paper, yet are hugely influential to the teaching and learning experience.

Wright (2012) argues that "emotions are fundamental to the ways we comprehend the world and to our experiences of it" (p. 1114), and we fully agree. Through this paper we articulate the roles and relationships of emotions in university fieldtrips teaching critical development geographies. We find that emotions are integral to the connections students create with people and places during the trip, and to their learning within it. We highlight crucial emotions of curiosity and care, demonstrating however that these do not emerge out of nowhere, but are rather deliberately cultivated by reflective pedagogies and practices. We take lead from our Nepali collaborators and "The Token of Love" they gave to us, to argue that emotions are crucial in generating meaningful field experiences, and in experiencing them as such.

Notes

1. The choice of field trip location reflects the focus of the programme; an MSc in Environment and Development, given that mainstream development and international aid focuses on countries of the global South.
2. Course Learning Outcomes: On completion of the course, students will be able to: (1) Critically reflect upon their experience in the Global South and appreciate the challenges posed by research in such context, and related research ethics, (2) Have an appreciation for qualitative and quantitative research methods in the field of environment and

development, (3) Have a critical grasp of development in practice, (4) Have a deeper appreciation of the key issues faced by socio-ecological systems in the fragile ecosystem of the Himalayas.

3. SIAS was established in 2011 as an indigenous platform for advanced research and scholarly exchange in the South Asia region. It emerges from the pressing need to nurture and promote critical research, scholarship and teaching in South Asia. As an endogenous initiative of region, it fills the critical gap in knowledge generation and capacity strengthening by cultivating and promoting more engaged practice of social science in addressing social and environmental challenges (https://www.sias-southasia.org/)

Author contributors

SS contributed the initial idea and overview of the writing process, so is listed as first author; All authors are equal contributors to data collection and analysis, and to the writing and review of final manuscript, so are listed in alphabetical order by surname thereafter.

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