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## Human Rights Encouragement Through Peaceful Resistance Initiatives in Rural Bogotá

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### Abstract

Human Rights violations are efficiently detained through peaceful resistance which leads into positive outcomes. Coding, pointing out or classifying what is wrong is not enough. Environmental safeguards, land ownership, community consolidation and female empowerment when developed following principles of Community-Based Tourism (CBT), is the idea supported. Through longitudinal research, case study was made in rural Bogotá. Three CBT initiatives were reviewed. First contextualization is made, then examination on the principles of community-based tourism and the concept of resilience. At the end, a

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discussion of why the cases should be recognized as an example of Human Rights encouragement is provided.

**Key Words:** Human Rights, Community Based Tourism, Peaceful Resistance

## Impulsando Derechos Humanos desde iniciativas de resistencia pacífica en Bogotá Rural

### Resumen

Las violaciones de los Derechos Humanos se contienen eficientemente a través de la resistencia pacífica que conduce a resultados positivos. Codificar, señalar o clasificar lo que está mal no es suficiente. La idea se implementa con la protección del medio ambiente, la propiedad de la tierra, la consolidación de la comunidad y el empoderamiento de las mujeres cuando se desarrollan siguiendo los principios del Turismo de Base Comunitaria (TBC). A través de la investigación longitudinal, se realizó un estudio de caso en la zona rural de Bogotá. Tres iniciativas de TBC fueron revisadas. Primero se realiza la contextualización, luego se analizan los principios del turismo comunitario y el concepto de resiliencia. Al final, se proporciona una discusión de por qué los casos deben reconocerse como un ejemplo para impulsar los Derechos Humanos.

**Palabras clave:** Derechos Humanos, Turismo Comunitario, Resistencia Pacífica.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Diversity in Colombia is not only represented by the number of species which reside in the territory, but it is also underlying in the differences found within the Colombian people in terms of access to opportunities, education, decent work and land distribution. This last trait has been responsible for escalating many of the conflicts that have been present in the country over the past decades. Carlyle (1961) in his paper *Land Distribution and Tenure in Colombia*, monitored the recording made on local journals in 1959, as well as a historical overview of the situation

as an attempt in trying to anticipate the explosion of wider violence manifestations (Carlyle Beyer, 1961). The forestall was correct, and as a response to the restlessness showed by people regarding the social and economic injustice produced by the unequal land distribution and how it had been underestimated until then, guerrillas in Colombia came to life. The three insurgent forces who brought the country into the most vicious terror known, were created in that decade. The FARC (Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia) was founded by 48 peasants in 1964 (Secretariado Nacional de las FARC-EP, 2018), afterwards the ELN (National Liberation Army) initiated operations in 1965 and the EPL (Popular Libertarian Army) was established in 1968 (Centro de Memoria Histórica, 2018). All of whom had in common the idea to begin a fight against inequalities and give a voice to the unheard.

Since then, the country has walked diverse paths and has been known among the international community for things like the excellent quality of its coffee, its national soccer league, the literature and peace Nobel prize, the drug cartels, violence and displacement. Violence continues to uproot thousands of people in Colombia despite the signed peace agreement (UNHCR, 2017), and in 2018 it was announced by the United Nations that the country had again won the first place among those countries who had most internally displaced persons. Data showed that it had reached 7.7 million people (El Tiempo, 2018), surpassing Syria.

Displacement and inequalities are big issues in Colombia. Based on the Gini index<sup>4</sup> historic data from Colombia show how general breaches within its people have prevailed over time. In 1976 Gini was at 0.51, ten

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<sup>4</sup> Gini index measures the extent to which the distribution of income from people or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution, being 0 perfectly equal and 1 implying perfect inequality (Banco Mundial, 2018).

years later the figure was 0.46, by 1996 the index was 0.48 (Departamento Nacional de Planeación, 2018), in 2008 it had gone up to 0.55 and by 2016 it descended again to 0.50 (Banco Mundial, 2018). As for land distribution, the available data based on the Gini Index for this sole aspect, it is shown that Colombia has one of the worst relations between equity and land distribution. In year 2000 the index was 0.85, and by 2012 it had increased up to 0.87 (Giraldo, 2015). Given this reality, the peace agreement signed in 2016 between the Colombian government and the insurgent group FARC had as its first point “Towards a new Colombian field: Integral Rural Reform”, and declared that that reform is to set the foundations for a structural transformation of field contributing to solve the historic causes of the conflict and the unsolved matter of land property rights, particularly its concentration, peasants exclusion and backlog of the rural communities which affects women and children especially (Gobierno Nacional y FARC-EP, 2016).

Other five points comprehend the complete agreement but instating this topic as the first one on the arrangement represents a huge message regarding the situation on the field and reinforces manifestations made about it. Land grabbing and exploitation of land is one of the central factors of forced displacement in Colombia, indigenous communities are especially vulnerable because mostly live on large collective territories that are rich in resources (bio-fuel, petrol, coca) or in strategic locations near the border (UNHCR, 2010). Furthermore, the relationship established with the territory is profound in the understanding that a territory determines the relationship established by individuals with the space they live in as a means to understanding what has shaped a person in its own uniqueness. The territoriality relation superimposes to the subjects and to the place where they have lived, where privileged experiences were

produced, not necessarily pleasurable, which constitute a territory of relations where the subject has been born and endured (territory of origin) or where social and productive relations were established, are references that shape the image of oneself and to the aspirations about the reality in which the daily life experiences is framed (Ocampo Prado, Chenut Prado, Férugson López, & Martínez Carpe, 2017, pág. 165). Territory then means, the identity itself with which a person finds its meaning in terms of belonging and roots.

Colombia is now reaching a historical moment of high complexity, to which it arrives after surviving decades of violence, inequality and war under which bloody facts linked to over 1755 guerrilla attacks which took place between 1965 and 2013, left millions of victims and victimizers, institutional uncertainty and multilayered inequality (Navas-Camargo & Cubides-Cardenas, 2018). It is a fundamental part of the process to have an aim to achieve peace in every social interaction and in order to be able to claim that, the ones presented as victims are to be considered main civil actors (Martínez Lazcano & Cubídes-Cárdenas, 2016). In accordance with this, it is to be recognized that in order to promote Human Rights within the citizens, it is necessary for the State to be able to provide a society based on democracy as it is to be recognized as a fundamental right. Such a democracy is only obvious if the people are able to make their own decisions, enjoyment of political, civil, cultural, social and environmental rights, among every other right. Such an approach is what Caldera (2018a) calls the Integral Democracy, that is, a kind of democracy understood as holistic and whole and that in which a human being is able to achieve their expectations thanks to the work being done by the State (Caldera Ynfante, Ávila Hernández, & De los Santos Olivo, 2018a).

## **2. CONTEXT**

Usme is located in one of those strategic places mentioned before and is therefore considered privileged because of its natural surroundings and closeness to urban Bogotá. The rural area of Usme encompasses 85% of the total territory and constitutes its greatest strategic strength in terms of sustainable production possibilities and systemic ecosystem services offered to the rest of the city. 18.483,9 hectares make up this territory which is inhabited by more than 1,500 peasant families, who derive their livelihood from agricultural production. To have a better understanding of why or how tourism can be a way of land preservation, it is first essential to understand how land is distributed in Bogotá and which are the demographic characteristics of the people who live there. Bogotá is the capital city of Colombia and is home for over eight million inhabitants. It's territory is about 163.663 hectares wide of which 122.257 hectares are rural (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2016). The rural community of Bogotá (which represents 0,2% of all inhabitants), is formed by peasants and indigenous people from the Muisca tribes primarily, followed by natives of every other corner of the country who have been displaced by violence and have been forced to migrate into Bogotá in search of shelter. Next to them, the former members of the revolutionary armed forces who have quit weapons have settled in the housing opportunities provided by the government. Migration is phenomenon not to be overlooked (Pólo Álvis & Serrano López, 2018).

Rural Bogota is then a set of neighborhoods where diversity coexists, and inequality, violence and poverty persist. The three main localities are Usme, Soacha and Ciudad Bolivar an according to official statistics of the National Department of Statistics (DANE, by its initials in

Spanish), three out of ten people there, live in poverty. Nonetheless, they have the responsibility of providing and producing water, oxygen, food and other ecosystem services in supply of urban Bogotá. Those characteristics make Usme a place of convergence among diversity and this context has driven the people into creating a multiplicity of alliances and social networks with the aim of implementing protective actions. For example, the locality shelters, countless youth organizations, corporations and foundations seeking to face socially harmful behaviors such as: youth delinquency, vulnerability of the public space, mismanagement of the environment from private companies as well as from the district's administration. The growing inflow of people has caused cultural and social changes. First, the people who frequently stand in the territory are not all known, traditional meetings are less common, and the patron saint festivities are no longer celebrated. Additionally, the first features of insecurity, increased home thefts, poor quality of urban facilities and limitations to access to education and health services are manifested (Pérez Martínez & Villamil Ruiz, 2018). What happens in this territory is also what happens along some of Colombia's extension where day to day life can be a struggle.

The main threat identified is the legal and illegal urban expansion on the peasant and indigenous territory (Alcaldía Mayor de Bogotá, 2018). The urban growth process in Latin America and the Caribbean has been characterized by a territorial planification which does not consider the natural resources nor the implications for the life quality of its people (Langebeck Cuéllar & Beltrán Vargas, 2016). As a response to urban expansion a first Community-Based Tourism initiative began to operate in Usme over 30 years ago, providing inspiration and have transformed themselves into what they are today. Despite the challenges



faced by the inhabitants, the descriptions made are not a totalizing account of a community that for most part is comprised of families trying to live day-to-day, often displaced, negotiating poverty and the absence of state care. There is pride in the community and a desire to counter negative narratives (Berents & Ten Have, 2017, pág. 105). Members of a family first founded the Agroparque Los Soches as means to resist urban expansion, as well as a way of finding an activity which kept the young members of the community away from gangs or such, and are proud of their peasant and indigenous roots characteristics.

The activity of visiting a place or traveling for recreation, pleasure or business was first regulated in Colombia through Law 300 of 1996, *General Law of Tourism*. In its first article, this law states that tourism should be recognized as an important industry for the country's development implying social growth for all its stakeholders. That law has been constantly updated and significant declarations have been made such as the avowal for it to be a tool for empowering and providing stronger participation for the local communities (MinCIT, 2003). Afterwards, in 2008 the country began to see tourism as an opportunity to place itself in the international arena, and through the program named *Colombia: world class tourism destination*, the development of community related activities was considered strategic (MinCIT, 2008). By 2011 the concept of Community Based Tourism was introduced in the local context and the activity was called to be a *prosperity factor* (MinCIT, 2011). Later, it was contemplated as a development tool for the poor and the indigenous communities which presented touristic potential, so microcredits for the development of the activity was to be granted (MinCIT, 2014). On 2018, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of tourism in Colombia had grown by 24% since 2012, and it had surpassed the growth presented by the general

GDP of the country which had only grown by 17% (Portafolio, 2018). This way, tourism has increasingly gained attention and it has helped both visitors and hosts to be more conscious about how to practice the activity.

### **3. COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM**

Tourism has traditionally been linked to practices which result in human rights violations, negative impacts on the environment and cultural mistreatment. It has been widely discussed how that activity represents a profound disconnection from what a traveler finds at destination in this leisure activity, and the reality lived behind curtains by the locals who host them. Forced evictions in order to build airports, golf courses or hotels is usual in countries like Ghana, Indonesia or Philippines, and is particularly worrying for vulnerable communities such as the indigenous peoples or agricultural workers who don't hold title deeds of the lands they live in (Kamp, 2009). The same happens in the opposite side of the world in countries like Ecuador, Mexico (BBC News, 2018) and Colombia, and the anxiety of losing the natural resources and biodiversity, as well as the preoccupation of the natives being evicted from their lands is still latent. Natural non-renewable resources become tourist attractions which often result breached given the lack of policies and procedures which aim for their preservation, and what is understood as a sacred tradition for a determined ethnicity, is quickly transformed into a commercial product to be sold as a souvenir in what is known as the fastest growing services industry in the world (Eriksson, Noble, Pattullo, & Barnett, 2009), tourism. It is distinguishing in that industry to see underpaid, intermittent and unworthy jobs occupied primarily by women. Therefore, a well-founded fear exists around the development of tourist related activities and

with much resistance it has recently begun to be seen as an alternative to serve as tool for poverty alleviation, but which needs to have better policy regulations which leads into incorporating a legal moral (Galán Galindo, 2016).

Nonetheless, tourism is still affirmed to be one of the main income sources for many developing countries and is called to be a key driver for socio-economic progress (World Tourism Organization, 2018), it is also one of the worlds broadest employers providing work mostly for women and youth (Sheik, 2018). As stated by Campbell (2002), Forstner (2004), Markandya et al. (2005) and Vaughan (2002) in Dodds, Ali &Galaski, tourism is to be perceived as an effective tool which can help create *added* income into areas where conservation affects local populations traditional livelihoods (Dodds, Ali, & Galaski, 2018, pág. 1548), but it is not to be overseen the emphasis made in regards of identifying the activity as added, and not primary for in this way one can also understand why the actions are mainly pursued by women instead of men, as explained further ahead. The World Tourism Organization emphasis the need of undergoing accomplishments in this industry and is emphatic in confirming that tourism in many developing and least developed countries is the most viable and sustainable economic development option because of its capacity of creating direct and indirect employment, more precisely one in every 12 jobs worldwide is tourism related (World Tourism Organization, 2010) or as much as one of every six people are employed in tourism in places like Malta (EUROSTAT, 2018). These figures show why is it important to pay closer attention to what happens in tourist related endeavors.

Community-based tourism lies its principles in the necessity of facing those negative impacts and providing a tool for the local communities to develop the tourism related activities under a frame of communitarian cohesion. Community tourism is an endogenous alternative to outsourced tourism strategies in poorly developed regions, which enables the creation of specific destinations that allow local communities to generate wealth with a new complementary activity, never a substitution, of the traditional dominant one. It is, therefore, a form of sustainable tourism based on the community that aims to satisfy the needs of both residents and current tourists without compromising the needs of future generations, who live or visit the tourist destination (Álvarez-García, Durán-Sánchez, & Del Río-Rama, 2018, pág. 2). One of its main characteristics is that activities are initiated by their own, and not imposed by external actors. Also, in addition to the traditional undertakings of tourism linked to leisure and the use of free time, this kind tourism allows the visitor to have an educational experience. It is one of the purposes of those undertakings to have the visitor learn new ways of being and new ways of doing things while showing respect for local traditions. Through CBT activities it is possible to live a true intercultural experience, understanding that interculturality is to be conceived as a means for creating a better, more understandable and peaceful society where the voice and the diverse opinions are taken into account, all of which should be appointed into consolidating a better, more wholesome community (Navas-Camargo & Montoya Ruíz, 2018).

### **a. Community-Based Tourism and Human Rights enforcement**

We wanted to identify if the activities developed around the CBT initiatives in Usme, derived in a safeguard for environmental preservation, as well as the establishment of a communitarian sense and belonging as a way of encouraging Human Rights. These characteristics have a direct incidence in the wellbeing of the person and are to be seen as a tool against the perpetration of wrongdoings against wildlife and human rights violations. As stated by Emna, Meško, Dobovšek and Sotlar, every present society face environmental crimes as one more of the many threats presented to human and wild life given the endless exploitation of natural resources and pollution (Eman, Mesko, Dobovsek, & Sotlar, 2013), therefore it should be a main interest to find ways in which to make peaceful resistance which leads into positive outcomes and not just coding, pointing out or classifying what is wrong. Violations are presented in various forms such as land grabs and forced displacement, loss of livelihoods, compromised access to water and other essential natural resources, environmental degradation, poor working conditions, exclusion from decision-making processes, cultural erosion and sexual exploitation of women and children (Barnett, 2011). Such violations are constantly present in the industry of tourism and are also commonly seen in the development of social interactions within Usme. Therefore, finding means of peaceful resistance for these undesirable outcomes, is to be valued.

In accordance with what Lynch (1990/2006) defined by green criminology, that is a variety of class related injustices that maintain an inequitable distribution of power while destroying human life, generating hunger, uprooting and poisoning the environment of all classes, peoples

and animals (as cited in Goyes and South, 2017: 167); and following what we understand was an indirect suggestion made by Brisman (2014, Pág. 29) when citing Halsey (2004) about how when “criminalizing a behavior is a very poor way of reducing its occurrence”, we strive to present a positive perspective of tourism, knowing that it is an activity loved by almost everyone but that given the misuse of it has been derailed and doomed to be a representation of human rights violations. It is then proposed to engage in consciously planned, community involved and lead by, environmentally safe and culturally respectful, tourism activities as a way of detaining crimes against nature.

Arriving into Usme has become easier overtime due the development of public transportation alternatives, but members of urban Bogotá resist visiting that territory. The security perception of that side of the city is negative and the social segregation characteristic in Colombia has a direct influence on the decision-making process. Those who belong to the upper socioeconomic levels are more likely to have tourism related activities somewhere else so the chances of becoming a perdurable tourist attraction relies solely on few possibilities. Schools making fieldtrips to recognize natural diversity, enterprises wanting to show corporate social responsibility by contributing to the economic development of a marginalized part of the city and foreigners who appreciate the natural scenery presented there, are the main visitors present in the initiatives.

#### **4. HUMAN RIGHTS ENCOURAGEMENT**

A community leader from Usme learned about Community-Based Tourism through a visit made to another region of Colombia back in the 1980's and was able to connect his own people with the principles of this activity. On an interview made to him, he narrated over which epitomes the Agroparque Los Soches was founded. Mr. Villabastated in a personal conversation on March 17, 2012 that:

I started writing little things that could come up with a project, so I put the name, "Los Soches" came out, I don't know where it came from...the imagination. Then Agroparque and I left the name because here in the village, Soches is the name given to the moorland deer's. It's a deerthat existed here....we needed to do something that gave strength to the land and not be urbanized. It had to have four aspects. A social aspect, you have to do a job with the social community, here the one who had money overlooked the other ones, so it was important for all of us to know that we are all human beings, and all human beings are worth the same, because of who we are and not because of what we have. The other aspect I said is to be important is the environment, we needed to do something to protect the environment, so it was also written down. The other thing was the cultural part because we had to get back our roots, we were losing our peasant identity because of being so close to the city, and for us it was important to preserve that identity. And the other aspect was the economical, because if a project didn't generate resources, you can't live out of illusions. Those four aspects were established and from there I began to manage the project (Villalba, 2012).

Agroparque Los Soches was then initiated over the visualization Mr. Villaba had, and became the first tourism related activity to be offered in Usme. Communitarian work and self-management of the territory, in order to welcome foreigners into short visits which at the same time permitted a learning experience for both sides. They have been carrying on

this idea over time, and even though the location where operations take place doesn't compare to what one might expect given the deterioration it presents, they managed to have a recognition from the government and were able to stop the proliferation of urban constructions which would have forced them to live in what they called "matchsticks boxes who would have killed them in life". Hence the local community welcomed the initiative, women found themselves to be much more appealed to the idea of having such an activity where hospitality was a centerpiece and the creation of crafts and agriculturally derived goods were to be commercialized. Men had a greater disposition to perform duties based on body strength, like preparing the ground for agriculture, working the land and raising the animals; perhaps as a way of detaining power. Consequently, crafting, cooking, hosting and guiding visitors was a responsibility carried on by women, and thanks to them that same initiative has expand into other districts within Usme. What began on a single community (in the District of Agroparque Los Soches), was then also pursued by women from other areas leading them to have a broader offer in regard to CBT within Usme.

Circuits along the territories are guided by the locals, throughout which visitors are invited to "live the experience" of being a peasant for a day. In *La Requilina*, tourists are able to visit 12 different farms after paying something between \$7 and \$10 American dollars, depending on the activities they want to access. Each farm belongs to a different family who holds a distinctive tradition, for example in one of them visitors can learn to grow or harvest onion, quinoa, coriander or beans, in some others they have the chance to make crafts and knitwear using local sheep`s wool. *Agroparque Los Soches* specializes in guiding tourists through paths alongside *Páramo de Sumapaz* (Moorland Sumapaz) where it's possible to



see and learn about plants and bird's diversity. The country's biodiversity has a magnificent disclosure through birds, being recognized as the world's country with the greatest diversity in that species (Maldonado, et al., 2018). Hence bird watching has purveyed an opportunity to be incorporated within the possibilities of nature-based tourism. If the visit is guided by members of *Asociación Turismo Rural Comunitario Ciudad Bolivar* (The Rural Communitarian Tourism Association of Ciudad Bolivar), tourists are more likely to have a horseback riding experience, do some hiking, prepare cheese, soups, breads and meats arranged by the native traditions, as well as taste local fruits, legumes, root vegetables and honey. Each initiative has something to offer and the philosophy behind them is that of a consolidated community practicing an activity which enables them to stay in the territory they worship and pursue the works they like whilst simultaneously preserving nature, the environment and the local culture. It is a way of incorporating the diverse cosmovisions and pluralisms of cultures. (Llano-Franco, 2016)

Agroparque Los Soches, La Requilina and *Asociación Turismo Rural Comunitario Ciudad Bolivar*, are the three most representative initiatives, of community-based tourism settled in rural Bogotá. They are all managed by women and among the success they are accountable for, being able to preserve their beloved territory and retaining youth because of the development of an activity which made them feel proud of who they are, are noticeable. As stated by Goyes (2016), rural people suffer tremendously from environmental victimization and the best way to obtain sound contextualized knowledge of their environmental problems is to open dialog with them. The practice of advancing academic knowledge by the interaction with the knowledges of the marginalized and impoverished should be permeated by a teleological activist practice in which the end is

not science or knowledge in itself but the prevention of harm (R. Goyes, 2016, pág. 513). Without purpose, the people of these community have been able to provide guidance to those others who were on a similar situation and aiming to find a tool which was pervasive of maintaining the status-quo. What has been done in rural Bogotá, can represent an answer to the call made by Brisman and South when stated that green criminologists have a lot to contribute by documenting and registering the resistance presented to those crimes (environmental), made either by traditional sociopolitical organizations, the “omnipresent movements” or the “do it yourself” activism (Brisman & South, 2017, pág. 107). Members of the local community have come together to “do for themselves”, what any political movement hasn’t been able to do for them and their accomplishments are to be noticeable. It shall also not be overseen that very few countries account for around 60%-70% of the world’s biodiversity, among them Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, Congo, Madagascar, China, India, Indonesia, Malasya and Australia (Gossling, 1999). So, the work done by the community represents an impact of significant dimensions and through the identification of the varif old ways of taking part in the industry, communities have been able to empower themselves and are now managing tourism related activities as a means of land preservation, community consolidation and female empowerment. Women of these communities are the ones who have been preserving over the years the idea of practicing tourism related activities to maintain what is sacred for them. A first visit to the territory was made in year 2012, accompanied by interviews to the leaders of the three initiatives was pursued as well as a process of tourism related capacity building was held. A follow up to the development of the initiatives throughout time was made until year 2018, finding that La Requilina has made significant

changes which denote a learning process and an accommodation of their proposals to a market-oriented scenario. Los Soches has suffered from disintegration of its members, and a small part of young men from the previous group have decided to work on their own. The majority is still represented by the women who are still working for the well-being of the community. The *Asociación Turismo Rural Comunitario* from Ciudad Bolívar, has widened their proposal and nowadays offer the possibilities of practicing diverse ways of making tourism such as Ecotourism, Agrotourism, Community-Based tourism and Gastronomic Tourism.

Women are the ones responsible of widening the perspective they had over tourism-based opportunities and have been able to provide a new method to the activity. A multidisciplinary approach is then offered to a problem which involves the self-proclamation of the human species as the holder of the right to exploit nature as well as other species (Sollund, 2018). The coping into new ways of living can then be perceived in a multi-layered way. First, because that resilience came as a response for preventing expulsion from their land and turned out to be something positive and previously unthought of. But also, because the female empowerment came subsidiary to their main intention of defending the territory.

Human Rights have then been represented through the realization of life project and therefore by being able to preserve what is important for them as a manifestation of liberty, freedom and life itself (Villalobos & Ganga, 2016; Villalobos, 2016). Tourism is being developed from within as a means of peaceful resistance and through communitarian cohesion. Not only local domination from the State has been stopped, but also that kind of domination that comes from outside as a way of

consensual foreign domination situation (Caldera Ynfante, 2018b) and which is very common in the tourism related industries.

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