



The hospitable city: social relations in commercial spaces

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Abstract: Recent theoretical discussions of the ‘spaces of hospitality’ have remained largely abstract, and have also ignored the commercial hospitality industry. At the same time, commercial hospitality is becoming increasingly important for the branding and promoting of cities. This paper highlights the connection between urban regeneration, commercial food and drink spaces, and the idea of the ‘hospitable city’ as it is conceived in both theoretical writings and in accounts of urban regeneration. The paper highlights the work of hospitality in the commercial sector, but also argues that commercial hospitality should not be seen as merely calculative, instrumental, economic exchange.

Key words: commercial spaces, food and drink, hospitality, urban regeneration.

I Introduction

Cities are to be judged by their welcome.
(Kahn, 1987: 12)

My aim in this paper is to draw on recent discussions of the spaces and geographies of hospitality in the contemporary city and to use these to explore the relationships between practices of commercial hospitality and processes of urban regeneration. I want to look at the ways in which certain versions of hospitality (and hospitableness) have come to be woven into urban regeneration schemes that attempt to create a hospitable ‘consumption identity’ as a form of competitive advantage (Neal, 2006). Drawing on insights from work in hospitality studies alongside research

by geographers (and others) into hospitality and into urban regeneration and gentrification, I aim in this paper to explore how commercial hospitality is constructed and performed in regenerating neighbourhoods to encapsulate (even to produce) new patterns of urban living – patterns often condensed to the (inadequate) short-hand ‘loft living’ (Zukin, 1982). In particular, I want to think about the ways in which urban regeneration, place promotion and civic boosterism utilize food and drink hospitality spaces as public, social sites for the production and reproduction of ways of living in and visiting cities and neighbourhoods. These are more than new spaces in which to eat, drink, or socialize. They are, arguably, spaces for the forging of

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new (or renewed) modes of urban living – modes which work to redefine ideas like hospitality and hospitableness, which they both promote and provision. Commercial hospitality spaces are, therefore, theatres of regeneration as much as they are theatres of consumption (Neal, 2006). They are also theatres of hospitality, the dramaturgical metaphor being especially appropriate to the ‘staging’ of the hospitable encounter at the table or across the bar.

An explicit focus on hospitality, I want therefore to suggest, opens up urban life to new forms of analysis. In particular, by putting philosophical or theoretical discussions of hospitality alongside accounts of the role of commercial hospitality spaces in producing new patterns of urban living and ‘rubbing’ these two bodies of research against each other, we can begin to see new ways of understanding and theorizing urban cultures and consumption. To date, work on hospitality has progressed along two quite separate paths – which we might label ‘philosophies of hospitality’ and ‘hospitality studies’ – and I want to show that there is a lot of productive potential in bringing those two bodies of work into proximity and contact. To do this, I explore how an ‘ethics of conviviality’ is being fostered through commercial hospitality in cities, though this is often simultaneously subject to intense regulation – a paradox perhaps especially evident in the UK in current debates about the night-time economy and alcohol licensing (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003; Hobbs *et al.*, 2003; Jayne *et al.*, 2006). By thinking about these kinds of issues along with philosophical discussions of the meanings, uses and limits of hospitable relations, I aim to show the productive potential of commingling the two ways of figuring hospitality on which I focus.

Theoretical discussions, largely informed by the writings of Jacques Derrida, have provided a much-needed rethink of how to understand hospitality as a way of relating, as an ethics and as a politics. These discussions have centred mainly on the relationship

between the idea (and ideal) of hospitality and the reception and treatment of immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers (for an overview, see Gibson, 2003). As such, hospitality has been brought into discussions of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism and, at the heart of this, comes debate about the gap between the ideal of unconditional hospitality (absolute openness to the other) and the various ways in which hospitality is conditioned, or rendered conditional – the limits and restrictions that frame the possibility of hospitality being given and received (Iveson, 2006). Within this work, there have often appeared discussions of ‘spaces of hospitality’, but these spaces have remained largely abstract (Dikeç, 2002).

In this paper I want to take a different tack by considering a form of hospitality relationship usually seen as conditional to the point of instrumentality, as narrowly and straightforwardly economic, and therefore as hopelessly restricted – the sphere of commercial hospitality, the domain of the hospitality industry. I want to argue that what we might call a ‘mundane hospitality’ is being forged, via commercial spaces, as an important part of making ‘the hospitable city’ – of producing a distinct urban identity, centred on the experience of consumption spaces and used as a place promotion device (Neal, 2006). This idea of the hospitable city has become important to the promotion of regenerating, post-industrial cities selling themselves as spaces of leisure and pleasure (Bell *et al.*, 2007). As well as welcoming the immigrant or the refugee, the hospitable city welcomes other guests, including the diurnal flow of visitors who come into the city to partake of its commercial hospitality offer. Food and drink, the entertainment economy in its various forms, may be dismissed as merely economic exchanges, even if window-dressed as ‘culture’, but I want to argue that a particular mode of hospitality is at work here; a mode, moreover, that has been progressively woven into regeneration scripts and schemes as cities attempt to draw in money and people.

So-called 'culture-led regeneration' has tried to package hospitality and hospitableness as traits to attract visitors, new residents and footloose capital. Here too the discourses of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism are positively valued and 'branded' along with commercial hospitality spaces (for an overview, see Miles and Paddison, 2005). Thinking the ways in which hospitality is mobilized in regeneration schemes through the lens of philosophies of hospitality can therefore produce valuable new insights into what we might call the 'boosterization' of hospitality (see Chan, 2005, for this kind of approach).

Places to eat and drink have, in fact, come to occupy a central role in the production of new forms of city living associated with the revitalization of previously deindustrialized and rundown urban districts (Zukin, 1991), as well as with forms of so-called cultural tourism, including 'gastro-tourism' and what we might call 'party tourism' or 'alco-tourism' (on the former, see Boniface, 2003). City-centre living is packaged and sold not only in terms of proximity to particular postindustrial forms of white-collar (or 'no-collar') work, but also in terms of access to consumption, cultural and leisure amenities, thereby revitalizing neighbourhoods previously affected by the move towards suburban and ex-urban relocation of housing, shopping and working (Jayne, 2005). City-centre eating and drinking have thus become important components of regenerating neighbourhoods, both in terms of attracting new residents and in terms of making them gastro-tourism destinations (Esperdy, 2002; Franck, 2005). But, before the paper moves to discuss commercial hospitality spaces, I want briefly to sketch current theoretical and philosophical discussions of hospitality.

II Rethinking the spaces of hospitality

A resurgence of interest in the philosophies of hospitality has found its way into geography recently, most commonly via the writings of Jacques Derrida (Derrida and Dufourmantelle,

2000; Derrida, 2001). Derrida's work on this issue has been widely influential, reinvigorating theoretical and philosophical debate about ways of relating, about hosts and guests. His discussions are an important frame for this paper, not least because of their influence across a range of disciplines concerned with the ethics and politics of the host-guest relationship. At the heart of Derrida's thinking is the paradox of absolute, unconditional hospitality. This is hospitality given by host to guest, whoever the guest may be, with no thought of reciprocity, or reparation: an openness to giving (or offering to give) to the 'absolute, unknown, anonymous other' (Derrida, 2000a: 25). To be the perfect host is to offer hospitality unconditionally, unreservedly, unendingly. Thus the theorizing of hospitality here is closely related to Derrida's work on the philosophy of the gift, with its freight of obligations and reciprocities (see Chan, 2005). This idealized form of hospitality, which Derrida calls (among other things) 'just hospitality', is locked in a 'non-dialectizable antinomy' with the conditional form, which he calls 'hospitality by rights', or 'hospitality in the ordinary sense' (Derrida, 2000a: 25, 59).

Commenting on this lineage of philosophical thought, Friese (2004: 68) agrees that 'the concept of hospitality is . . . situated within a constellation marked by distinct ambivalences'; these include, he adds, 'tensions between hospitality and hostility, proximity and distance, belonging and being foreign, inclusion and exclusion' (2004: 68; see also Dikeç, 2002). The obligation of reciprocity in particular marks the compromises and conditions at the heart of hospitality, except in its idealized, unconditional, 'absolute' form.

Moreover, for both host and guest there are subtle rules of etiquette: how much to offer, how much to accept, how long to stay, and so on: a welcome given freely can be abused, taken for granted, overstayed. As Dikeç (2002: 236) puts it, hospitality is a gesture of engagement; hosts and guest are, moreover, 'mutually constitutive of each other, and thus, relational and shifting'

(p. 239). The whole business is fraught with ambiguity and uncertainty, and the weight of all that uncertainty means for Friese (2004: 71) that 'The diverse practices of hospitality . . . have to be understood as processes which order [these] ambivalences in an effort to place the unknown, albeit precariously, within the social geography'. As Derrida (2000a: 55) remarks, this ordering means making choices about whom to host, whom to permit to be a guest: conditional hospitality involves the 'choosing, electing, filtering, selecting [of] invitees, visitors, or guests', as well as attempting to agree the contract or the terms and conditions through which hospitality will be given and received. Unconditional hospitality is even more fraught, since it disrupts or refuses this precarious ordering, making the relationship between host and guest *asymmetrical*; Friese notes that obligations 'must be noticed and noted . . . for hospitality to come into being and subsist' (p. 74). The asymmetry of absolute hospitality unbalances rights and obligations, upsetting the social codes that make hospitality possible at all because of the uneven distribution of power on the two sides – the giver, the host, holds all the cards (Chan, 2005). Indeed, Derrida concedes that this idealized, 'hyperbolic' hospitality is 'abstract, utopian, and illusory' (2000b: 79, 135).

Nevertheless, a number of writers have focused on Derrida's rethinking of hospitality as a potent political imperative and as a useful critical tool to think with. Tregoning (2003), for example, sees hospitality as offering 'ways of being-with-others which are inaccessible through community', and therefore as politically preferable to the stifling boundedness of community with its belongings and exclusions, insiders and outsiders. This is an important intervention in the context of this paper in that Tregoning puts the philosophy of hospitality to productive work in terms of postcolonial theory to show how it can open up thinking about ways of relating. In this aim, and in others, his work directly mirrors my intentions here: by using hospitality as a

conceptual tool, he unlocks an area that had been dead-ended by debates about 'community' and 'identity'. In much the same way, I want to reopen discussion of commercial hospitality spaces, which have been largely cast aside in theorizations of hospitality, seen as narrowly instrumental and calculative.

Tregoning also traces the hostility latent within hospitality, in terms of the tacit limitations placed on the guest by the host (not to take too much or stay too long), and the slip-page between host and hostage, in terms of the obligations stitched into giving and receiving. Equally importantly, Tregoning discusses the *work* of hospitality, the labour that (often invisibly) underwrites the host's capacity to offer hospitality embodied in shelter, food, drink and company. The host is always assumed to be 'master of his house'. This opens up an insightful consideration of the genderings of hospitality beyond the remit of this paper, and also highlights the *effort* behind the acts on both sides of the equation. As I turn later to consider commercial hospitality, we will see how this labour is conceptualized in considering the hospitality industry as the site of 'faked' or 'staged' hospitality as simply economic exchange.

In a close reading of Derrida and Emmanuel Levinas, Barnett (2005) further considers hospitality's geographies and ideas of otherness, as well as challenging the assumed apoliticality of a deconstructionist or poststructuralist approach to hospitality. In particular, Barnett highlights how Derrida sees unconditional hospitality as 'a pious and irresponsible desire' (Derrida, 2001: 22, quoted in Barnett, 2005: 17) and calls instead for ways of relating to and *acknowledging* otherness and others in their specificity, for a rewriting of the geography of responsibility (see also Iveson, 2006). In so doing, the philosophy of hospitality is brought into a critical (potential) relationship with enactments of hospitality and inhospitality: a Derridean perspective opens up the analysis of moments of hospitality through its close reading of the normative ideal of pure hospitality. This is not

meant as a way to show that 'real' hospitality does not measure up to this impossible ideal, but to bring to our attention the ways that different theorizations and enactments of hospitality might be read alongside and against each other.

For example, through a reading of the installation of a commemorative pagoda in Birmingham, UK, Chan (2005) draws on Derrida to consider 'the gifts, exchanges, or compensations that make hospitality possible' (p. 12).¹ Chan highlights the coupling of hospitality to multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism in narratives of urban change, which he shows to be tied to the logic of gifts and compensation, of 'repaying' the generosity of the host (Birmingham) by the guest (Chinese immigrants) through the giving of symbolic gifts (the pagoda). In this case, he says, 'a (restricted) welcome' is offered through 'a discourse of contribution' – the economic and cultural contribution of immigrants that 'buys' them the right to the hospitality of the city (Chan, 2005: 26). But this exchange, he argues, 'annuls the very hospitality of the city' since it emphasizes repayment, that is, *conditional* hospitality marked by what Chan calls an 'economy of reciprocity' (2005: 26; see also Dikeç, 2002). While the Derridean line here seems to close off other ways of reading the figuring of hospitality in this example, I want to suggest that 'philosophies of hospitality' and 'hospitality studies' can work in productive tension, arguably best exemplified by thinking about the uses and spaces of hospitality in the city.

Derrida turns his attention to the city in *On cosmopolitanism and forgiveness*, pondering the 'city of refuge' as a potential space of hospitality, and noting importantly that hospitality signifies 'the *public nature (publicité)* of public space' (Derrida, 2001: 22). Chan also discusses public space as a potential site for hospitality to be enacted, suggesting the need to turn attention to the kinds of spaces in which the meetings-of and relatings-between hosts and guests take place. This is not to romanticize public space as a site of pure

encounter, however; Chan's focus on the building of a pagoda shows how public space is a palimpsest of discourses, from 'formal' discourses such as planning to 'informal' discourses such as those of the 'economic contribution' of immigrants. This makes the focus on public space doubly important, because it already shows the forces of politics and economics striating space (Low and Smith, 2005).

In what follows, I too want to consider spaces of hospitality that are striated by politics and economics, by money and power. But I want to bring back into the discussion the spaces of commercial hospitality, spaces so far excluded from philosophical debate, consigned to simplistic market relations and cynical consumerist exchange. Dikeç (2002) rightly raises the issue of the need to specify what the 'spaces of hospitality' actually are, but it seems fairly certain from the trajectory of his discussion that they are not conceived in terms of commercial hospitality, of the hospitality industry. But, through sketching some recent work on urban regeneration and commercial hospitality spaces, I want to suggest that the commercial sphere should be brought into these discussions, rather than dismissed as narrowly economic and therefore too conditioned and conditional.

Lashley (2000) notes that definitions of hospitality within the academic literature of hospitality studies, which largely has a business/management or economics focus, routinely conflate hospitality with commercial exchange. Among the definitions he cites are 'the provision of food and/or drink and/or accommodation away from home' and 'a contemporaneous exchange designed to enhance mutuality (well being) for the parties involved through the provision of food and/or drink, and/or accommodation' (Lashley, 2000: 3).² Lashley moves on to differentiate social, private and commercial hospitality domains, and to map out their different modes of hospitality (and also their convergences and overlaps). Private hospitality takes place in the home, commercial hospitality in an economic exchange

context, while social hospitality for Lashley means the broader social codes, forms of sociality and sociability, that can be enacted in private or commercial spaces. Social hospitality also hints at social *inhospitality*, as in consumption-based status differentiations that are deployed to mark social class location, for example (Bourdieu, 1984; Skeggs, 2005).

I want to stay with the emphasis in Lashley's opening definitions on food, drink and accommodation (though I shall not be discussing the latter here; see Gibson, 2003), and with the commercial domain (and also with Lashley's reminder that 'social hospitality' can take place there). In particular, I want to try to connect theoretical debates about hospitality to the commercial domain – the hospitality industry – and to urban regeneration. I want to show how a variant on the idea of hospitality has become central to regeneration policy and practice, as cities increasingly rebrand themselves as pleasure zones, entertainment centres and tourist attractions, using leisure and pleasure as a key part of their brand (Bell *et al.*, 2007; Neal, 2006). Urban competitiveness is clearly articulated through hospitality (or its close synonyms conviviality, sociality, vitality – all key terms in the regenerators' lexicon),³ provisioned through commercial enterprise but nevertheless argued to be having a broader transformative impact on the cultures of cities. What is particularly important in thinking about this use of hospitality, I want to suggest, is how it enables us to interrogate what a concept like hospitality *means* when deployed as part of entrepreneurial urban governance; but also, by looking more closely at what goes on in commercial hospitality spaces, to pull such spaces back into theorizations of hospitality. As I aim to show, the ways of relating that are practised in bars, cafés, restaurants, clubs and pubs should be seen as potentially productive of an ethics of conviviality that revitalizes urban living. The encounters in those spaces should, therefore, be reinstated in discussions of the ethics and politics of hospitality.

III Urban regeneration and hospitality

In a well-known account, Zukin (1991) draws a parallel between the transformations to the US city of New York's cityscape brought about by processes of gentrification, and the rise of *nouvelle cuisine*. [G]ourmet food – specifically, the kind of reflexive consumption beyond the level of need that used to be called gastronomy – suggests an organization of consumption structurally similar to the deep palate of gentrification' (Zukin, 1991: 206). For Zukin, this is exemplified in how both urban gentrification and *nouvelle cuisine* appropriate and subvert 'segmented vernacular traditions' (p. 212) – building styles or cooking styles – leading to the serial reproduction of a narrow range of key elements and reflecting new regimes for the production and consumption of cultural value. Both gentrification and *nouvelle cuisine* ambivalently combine tradition with innovation, authenticity with novelty. This ambivalence is symbolized for Zukin in the chasing out of 'other' occupants of space or providers of food and drink, such as homeless people or downtown cafeterias: some vernacular traditions have less cultural value than others. This critique recurs in commentary on gentrification and regeneration, which are assumed to result in serially reproduced, generic 'blandscape' in cities the world over (Atkinson, 2003; Miles and Miles, 2004).⁴

Zukin also emphasizes the role of the 'critical infrastructure', a group which she defines as the city dwellers 'who produce and consume, and also evaluate, new market-based cultural products' (1991: 201), and who have instigated 'not just a shift in taste, but in the way taste is produced' (p. 203). This critical infrastructure is made up of people sometimes also referred to as 'new cultural intermediaries' (see Featherstone, 1991), who actively work – through both their jobs and their leisure and lifestyle activities – to set the boundaries of legitimate taste, and to embody and perform taste through their crafting of a distinct lifestyle (variously labelled in popular and academic accounts as cosmopolitan,

metropolitan, or 'boho'). They are 'symbolic workers' (Featherstone, 1991), whose labour is directed to managing images and signs, including the image of the city. Hospitableness is one key sign, one key component of the image of a city used in place promotion (Neal, 2006). Thus the work of these new cultural intermediaries is one of the key labours of urban hospitality and hospitableness (other labours will be discussed later).

The commercial hospitality sector is, then, a vital space in which taste and lifestyle are produced and consumed through food and drink, music and décor, ambience and service style. Restaurants, cafés and bars (as well as shops, music venues, public spaces, and so on) are therefore very important in producing and continually reproducing the 'feel' or 'buzz' of a particular neighbourhood or city, and in keeping it 'hip' – thereby powering the area's ongoing gentrification and regeneration, though not, it should be emphasized, always uncontentiously (Hobbs *et al.*, 2003). While 'culture-led' regeneration has tended officially to elevate 'high culture' as the unique selling point of particular cities (Miles and Paddison, 2005), the cultures of food, drink and entertainment, whether 'high' or 'low', are equally significant. In fact, food, drink and entertainment have effectively been reincorporated into definitions of urban culture, with consumption as a leisure and tourism activity being accorded ever greater significance in urban economic fortunes and futures (Miles and Miles, 2004; Jayne, 2005).

Eating out, for example, has become a central part of the 'experience economy' of cities (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Finkelstein (1999) renames eating out using the neologism 'foodatainment', to emphasize that it is about so much more than just eating (see also Miele and Murdoch, 2002, on this 'entertainment aesthetic' in dining out). Foodatainment is regularly conscripted into the place promotion techniques so central to regeneration, with parts of the city 'sold' on

the basis of the food on offer – especially, perhaps, in the case of 'ethnic' foods, as in Chinatowns, Little Italies and so on (Bell, 2004). Other 'quarters' of the city not previously associated primarily with food and eating have also sought to capitalize on the boosterist possibilities of catering to visitors and city dwellers. As an example, witness the growing numbers of eateries in the gay village in Manchester, UK. Not so long ago the village was associated with drinking, dancing and sex, but now draws in the business lunch crowd and pre-club diners (Ryan and Fitzpatrick, 1996) – though this rewriting of the village has crowded out some previous uses, especially those incompatible with its new cosmopolitan, 'metrosexual' image (Binnie, 2004).

The form of foodatainment emphasized by Finkelstein – high-style, haute cuisine restaurant dining – is also accompanied by other forms of food and drink-related entertainments, in which different forms of hospitality and commensality are enacted (Franck, 2002). And, of course, the 'gastro-economy' of cities or districts also has parallels in what we might call 'drinkatainment' – the production of themed bars and pubs and other 'drinking experiences', ranging from theme pubs to club-like 'vertical drinking' venues, mega-bars, themed pub crawls and 'drinking quarters' (Hobbs *et al.*, 2003).

Both foodatainment and drinkatainment have, then, become cornerstones of the urban regeneration script, which increasingly emphasizes the value of the night-time and visitor economies to cities seeking to improve their fortunes (Montgomery, 1995; Chatterton and Hollands, 2003). In the following sections, I want to sketch some recent work that seeks to show how food and drink venues, as particular kinds of hospitality space, have been shown to open up broader possibilities for transforming urban public culture, promoting forms of hospitality and hospitableness beyond economic exchange.⁵

IV Urban hospitality and hospitableness

Latham's (2003) study of a gentrifying neighbourhood in Auckland, New Zealand, is a useful place to start. Latham offers a particularly insightful account, showing that commercial hospitality spaces should not be reduced to narrow economic relations; neither should they be written out of thinking about the production of the hospitable city. At the heart of this study is Latham's recognition of the 'need to engage more positively with the broader contemporary enthusiasm for the city [by] . . . thinking carefully about both the context and the emergence of particular kinds of spaces and types of social practices associated with specific instances of urban change' (Latham, 2003: 1699). He is critical of many academics' lack of understanding of and empathy with the day-to-day (and, indeed, night-to-night) uses of space, and of their vague idealization of the city against which 'real' cities are found wanting: 'If urban political economists are staunchly uncompromising in their analysis of contemporary cities, they are strangely romantic in their view of how this ideal city should work' (p. 1703) – a comment which loudly echoes the problematic idealization of unconditional hospitality found in philosophical accounts.

Through a case study of one small neighbourhood in Auckland, Latham detects a new form of public culture, based around cafés, bars and restaurants. Crucially, he notes that 'what is happening there is about more than an aesthetics of consumption' (p. 1706); the cafés and bars have 'acted as a key conduit for a new style of inhabiting the city' (p. 1710). 'Consumption has quite literally helped to build a new world' (p. 1713), he writes – hence the importance of this kind of study of micro-practices, of how people make use of bars and cafés in their everyday lives, but also the importance of looking outwards from those micro-practices, to witness their broader impacts. For, as Latham shows, what goes on in these hospitality spaces is transforming the broader public culture and ways of living in the neighbourhood.

By zooming in on commercial hospitality spaces, Latham argues for a more contextualized understanding of the role such sites play in new patterns of urban living. He notes the central role of entrepreneurs in developing these spaces, showing that many of the key players saw what they were doing as 'a kind of socio-cultural project' (Latham, 2003: 1717) – they were investing in producing new ways of living (and not just new markets for their food and drink). Like the 'critical infrastructure' identified by Zukin (1991), the entrepreneurs creating hospitality spaces in this area of Auckland have played a crucial role in defining the 'feel' of the neighbourhood, and in consciously shaping their bars and cafés to promote particular kinds of conviviality, informality and hospitableness. Acting as cultural intermediaries, the bar and café owners have invested in more than their businesses as businesses; they have invested in transforming the neighbourhood and the ways of living it contains. Other studies have similarly stressed the crucial role played by local entrepreneurs in driving commercial gentrification forward. While some read this more cynically, as when Hobbs *et al.* (2003: 46) see the creation of a sense of 'communitas' in venues as a means of generating customer loyalty and nothing more, others have called for more involvement of local entrepreneurs as partners in the policy and planning process (Lovatt and O'Connor, 1995).

Latham (2003: 1717) claims that new commercial hospitality spaces can be part of a broader 'socio-cultural project' in a neighbourhood, embodied in the 'ethos, aesthetics and clientele' of the cafés and bars. In the neighbourhood he studied, these spaces have been catalytic rather than merely parasitic, suggesting a need to expand the understanding of the kinds of hospitality provided and promoted by the commercial sector (Lashley, 2000). Importantly, Latham notes that the two streets he centred on are not purified spaces of gentrification in which older, conflicting uses of space were chased away or crowded out:

while the 1990s were perhaps most defined by the emergence of [new hospitality spaces

characterised as hybrid bar-restaurants], there is no parallel collapse in the numbers of other forms of hospitality spaces. [The area continues to host] a diverse range of hospitality spaces from cheap cafés . . . to good-value ethnic restaurants . . . and even including a range of older-style male-oriented haunts. (Latham, 2003: 1718)

Instead of the replacement of pre-existing vernacular traditions described in downtown New York by Zukin (1991), or the privatization of space damned by Atkinson (2003) as 'domestication by cappuccino', a convivial, hospitable ecology has emerged, through which hospitality and commensality are woven into new patterns of urban living (and eating and drinking). The conviviality, the commensality, the hospitableness of commercial venues is seen by Latham to spill out into the streets, generating 'new solidarities and new collectivities' (Latham, 2003: 1719), and a greater sense of belonging.

Laurier and Philo (2004) have similarly looked at the communities of practice in cafés and at the micro-practices that owners, employees and customers perform together to constitute the hospitable space of the café. Cafés have become sites where economic, political and cultural matters come into contact and are mutually transformed. They also attempt to move beyond critiques of coffee shops and cafés as producing a 'monocultural middle-class, gentrified and polite society' embodied in 'cappuccino culture', by looking more closely at what actually goes on in these spaces (Laurier and Philo, 2004: 8). And Laurier has also explored the interactions in cafés with other colleagues, investigating from an ethnomethodological perspective how staff produce informality and intimacy, how customers become 'regulars' and then perform their 'regularness' (and how this is reproduced by staff), and how an ambience of openness and informality is maintained by ongoing interactions between staff and customers, regulars and newcomers (Laurier *et al.*, 2001). As they sum up, their study was in part about how mundane practices such as 'queuing, reading door-signs,

table setting, table clearing, chattering and sharing' make the café they studied into particular kind of 'gathering place for its suburban neighbourhood' (p. 23). These practices generate a welcoming feel (though this does not mean there are no exclusions) in the ongoing work of commercial hospitality in the café, an idea we can usefully deploy at different spatial scales to explore what Illich (1973) called the convivial mode of production, matched by a convivial mode of consumption. As a microcosm of the city, the coffee shop or café provides rich insights into the kinds of 'lighter touch forms of sociality' that Thrift (2005: 145) sees as vital but overlooked elements of urban life (see also Morrill *et al.*, 2005).

Different urban food spaces have also been discussed in similar terms by, among others, Esperdy (2002), Anderson (2004) and Bell and Binnie (2005). Anderson neatly conceptualizes the Reading Terminal Market, in Philadelphia, USA, as a 'cosmopolitan canopy', literally a shelter under which diverse people interact with a marked civility towards one another. When the market was renovated in the 1990s, Anderson writes, locals feared it would become an 'exclusive' food court, yet it has managed to retain its character and ambience, and its clientele. The ambience is summed up by Anderson as 'a calm environment of equivalent, symmetrical relationships' (Anderson, 2004: 17), a feature he speculatively attributes to the food on sale at the market's numerous eateries, and in particular their multi-ethnic offerings. While other writers have been critical of 'multicultural eating' as a shallow way of relating to the other (see, for example, hooks, 1992; Hage, 1997), Anderson shows how food and eating have a positive role to play in creating 'a feeling of being involved with the others present', with the informality of the eateries encouraging lone diners to talk to each other: 'when taking a seat at a coffee bar or lunch counter, people feel they have something of a license to speak with others, and others have license to speak with them' (Anderson, 2004: 18).

The market, and other similar cosmopolitan canopies, also afford people what Anderson calls 'practical and expressive folk ethnography' (p. 21), otherwise known as 'people watching'. On the streets, he says, people avoid each other's gaze, but under the protective canopy, somehow they feel more able and willing to look, be looked at, chatter, and so on: the space of the market enables hospitable relations between its users to come into being. Also exploring the role of food markets in gentrification in UK and US cities, Esperdy (2002) suggests that successful schemes to renovate markets respond to the pre-existing uses of the market as an economic and social space, concluding that 'If the revitalised market succeeds in not merely accommodating this social mix, but in cultivating it, then it may become a model for 21st-century urbanism' (Esperdy, 2002: 47). Such spaces are, she writes in an echo of Anderson, 'well adapted for the browsing or strolling of the postmodern *flâneur*, whose aimless sojourns now include the spaces of contemporary urban consumption' (p. 49). Offering a similar reading of food spaces in Manchester, UK, Bell and Binnie (2005) counter Zukin's (1991) argument about gentrification chasing out older, vernacular spaces and uses of space. The spectacular regeneration of Manchester has created new public and commercial spaces, but these often sit alongside pre-regeneration food spaces in a 'convivial ecology' of delis and take-aways, food halls and market stalls.

Latham has also returned to some of these issues in the context of drinkertainment, in a paper with McCormack on the 'materialities' of the city (Latham and McCormack, 2004). The effects of alcohol (and other psychoactive substances) are among the materialities they consider: being drunk in the city produces, in their account, particular socialities, particular ways of relating (see also Jayne *et al.*, 2006). Latham and McCormack discuss Temple Bar, in Dublin, Republic of Ireland, as an emblematic site of contemporary concerns over (excessive) drinking in cities. Places like

Temple Bar have been transformed into 'drinking destinations', partly as a result of low-cost transport (especially air travel), and partly as a promotional exercise by hospitality businesses (riding on the success of the earlier redesignation of Temple Bar as a cultural quarter; see Rains, 1999). As with numerous other cities in the flight paths of the low-cost tour operators and with favourable currency exchange rates and prices, Dublin has become a hotspot for 'stag' and 'hen' parties (largely from the UK), and other collective alcohol-based short-stay tourism – it has become ambivalently branded as a 'party city'.

Latham and McCormack (2004: 716) note that 'Temple Bar became understood as a contradictory space – an enclave of cultural consumption on the one hand, a centre of alcohol-sodden street hedonisms on the other hand'. As they add, Temple Bar thus slots into a long lineage of moral panics about drinking and drunkenness in cities; but Latham and McCormack also try to complicate things, try to resist such an easy reading, by focusing on the 'affective elements of alcohol' (p. 717), and on how these *affects* produce particular experiences of the city and of urban hospitality. Of course, the moral panics around drinking in cities also produce *effects* in terms of regulation and restriction, both formal and informal (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003; Hobbs *et al.*, 2003). What Hobbs *et al.* (2003: 38) refer to as 'the alcohol-fuelled night-time economy' produces a wide range of affects and effects, from the boozy matiness of the taxi queue to the random violence of drunken brawling, as well as the demonization of 'binge drinkers' (Skeggs, 2005). As Hobbs *et al.* add, the city of drink today is the site of both new socialities and new modes of governance and regulation (their main focus is one aspect of this, doormen or bouncers – commercial security people who police access to, and behaviour in, bars and clubs). The changing cultures of cities thus require new modes of governance.

While not explicitly addressing the idea of hospitality, Hobbs *et al.* neatly summarize the

ambiguities of drinkertainment as a place promotion tool, offering a pre-emptive critique of the UK government's 2005 reform of licensing laws as well as its broader desire to remodel city culture along 'continental' European lines (Urban Task Force, 1999). As Latham and McCormack (2004) show, alcohol occupies a complex place in cities: at once a central symbol of conviviality and the focus of moral panics. This complexity is equally evident in Edensor's (2006) research on waterfront development in Port Louis, Caudan, Mauritius. Waterfront regeneration is often cited as an archetypal form of post-industrial blandscaping, exported all around the world, but Edensor shows how the redeveloped waterfront at Port Louis has produced new meeting places and a revitalized public culture, centred on the pub. New socialities, lubricated by alcohol and afforded by the space of the pub and the waterfront, are encouraging forms of social mixing previously difficult and uncommon in Mauritius. And on a regenerated waterfront in the UK, at NewcastleGateshead, Miles (2005) also shows that redevelopment does not necessarily chase out sociability. Waterfronts can be spaces of hospitality – in the case of NewcastleGateshead, the story is of the resilience of pre-existing forms of sociability, which have accommodated, and been accommodated by, new developments, rather than of the production of new cultural practices as discussed by Edensor. Newcastle's reputation as a party city, like Dublin's, has drawn on a heritage of associations with drinking-based sociability. The 'success' of the redevelopment here has been in terms of minimizing the disruption to (and in some case reanimating) long-established 'ways of relating'.

As already noted, Latham (2003) highlighted the role of entrepreneurs in the production of spaces of hospitality, and in the production of what Dikeç (2002: 235) calls a 'sensibility' of hospitality, in the Auckland neighbourhood he studied. And Laurier *et al.* (2001) showed how hospitality was produced and reproduced in relations between

host and guest in the context of a neighbourhood café. Hobbs *et al.* (2003) similarly remind us of the *work* of drinkertainment, of the bar staff and bouncers engaged in the interactive service encounters that they call 'good time working' (see also Crang, 1994). This raises a further question: can hospitality be bought and sold? How can what Derrida (2000b: 83) calls 'the hospitality of paying up', *literally* in this case, be squared with idealizations of the host-guest relation?

V Staging hospitality

Encounters in commercial settings often stage particular forms of hospitality, such as the attentive waiter or the affable barman. The staged or 'faked' hospitality that rests on monetary exchange (bar tabs and restaurant bills on one side, wages and tips on the other) is argued by some writers irrevocably to make such encounters insincere, *inhospitable*, 'calculative hosting' (Lashley, 2000: 14). Other critics, however, suggest that both sides, host and guest, are 'in the know', and take pleasure from the very act of staging, from the 'fake sincerity' of this 'postmodern hospitality' (Williams, 2000: 229). As with arguments about the tourist's (and post-tourist's) encounter with 'authentic' host cultures, there is an acknowledgement of complicity on both sides – a willingness to 'play along' knowingly, but no less pleasurably (Rojek and Urry, 1997). In fact, Williams (2000) goes so far as to argue that commercial hospitality is *inherently* postmodern, a knowing simulacrum or performance of an imaginary idealized relationship between host and guest – an interesting twist on Derrida's thinking, and one which may help us retheorize encounters in commercial hospitality spaces.

Of course, labour relations and working conditions in the hospitality industry do not guarantee such a mutually agreeable contract of hospitality (Gladstone and Fainstein, 2003; Lucas, 2004). While hospitality should, Derrida dreams (2000b: 83), be given and received *graciously*, the work of hospitality can inevitably produce less hospitable service

encounters (a regular complaint of restaurant critics; see Bell, 2004). Indeed, 'one person's leisure is for many others low-paid, part-time and casual work' (Worpole, 1991, quoted in Hobbs *et al.*, 2003: 23). Some people have little or no choice but to play the host, and guests can be equally ungracious.⁶ Repeating the tourism analogy, Gibson (2003) notes that the guest can have the economic upper hand, controlling the ways they are hosted. Clearly, in the commercial setting, the rules of the game are much more complex, but that does not mean they always play out one way. Any theorization of commercial hospitality must therefore be attentive to the complexities of hosting and guesting specific to the commercial context.

Other studies have explored the labours of hospitality in terms of the workers that help produce particular kinds of welcome through the manifold seen and unseen service encounters that pattern the visitor economy. Cosmopolitan tourism is enabled through another cosmopolitanism, of migrant workers staffing bars, restaurants, hotels and visitor attractions (Werbner, 1999; Gibson, 2003). These workers are undertaking labours of hospitality different from both the critical infrastructure sketched earlier, and the idealized host in philosophical accounts which centre on the generosity of the 'master of the house'. Gibson (2003) quotes from the UK film *Dirty Pretty Things* to illustrate this point (see also Zylinska, 2005). The film centres on hotel workers in London and, in particular, on two members of what Gibson calls the city's immigrant underclass, a Nigerian illegal immigrant, Okwe, and Senay, a Turkish asylum seeker. Okwe sums up their position in the hospitality equation: 'We are the people you never see. We're the ones who drive your cabs, clean your rooms and suck your cocks' (quoted in Gibson, 2003: 382). Like the invisible hospitality of the perfect host welcoming the guest into his home, commercial spaces sustain a hospitable ambience through the employment of backstage and frontstage workers, differentially valued

and remunerated for their role in the performance.

There is a further labour to consider here, of course: the staging of hospitality by planners and city managers, those tasked with the entrepreneurial governance of the post-industrial city. A number of writers have commented on the possibility (or impossibility) of planning for hospitality, conviviality or sociality. Thrift (2005: 144), for example, raises the question of how 'kindness' might be built into cities, suggesting that 'cities have to be designed as if things mattered, as if they could be kind too. Cities would then become copying machines in which a positive affective swirl confirmed its own presence'. Peattie (1998: 250) meanwhile notes that conviviality cannot be coerced, but that the infrastructure to enable or encourage it may be planned and bought: 'space, seats, food and drink, lighting, sound systems and so forth may be sold or rented or ceded by owners and governments'. And, she adds, such investment will reap dividends, as 'conviviality is itself a valuable collective product which may be combined with [other] marketable items to create a richly profitable environment', though she cautions that commerce and conviviality can be either competing or complementary forces (1998: 250). Others make more policy-friendly calls for partnership working between the state and commerce (Bianchini, 1995; Lovatt and O'Connor, 1995), though this is seen as highly unlikely by those with a more cynical reading (Hobbs *et al.*, 2003). But I think that Montgomery (1995: 106) makes the most useful assessment of what is at stake here, when he writes that 'providing the space for transactions across the day and night is what cities have always done . . . It is what cities are good at'. These transactions can be social, commercial, sexual, conversational, and so on. The task of planners and managers is, therefore, to create opportunities for these variegated transactions to take place.

Taken together, then, these studies point to the importance of understanding how the

performance of hospitality and hospitableness in commercial settings is engaged in by staff and customers alike, all of whom have a stake in something more than getting fed or watered. What is at stake cannot, moreover, be simply reduced to economic exchange. What is at stake is a collective, creative endeavour to produce and reproduce staff-to-customer and customer-to-customer hospitableness as a concrete enactment of a new way of living in cities. Relations of host and guest could, in the process, be rewritten, not to become like the impossible Derridean ideal, but to avoid their foreclosure or dismissal by academics, planners or those who live in and with cities.

VI Conclusion

The deployment, staging or performance of hospitality and hospitableness in commercial spaces should not be dismissed as calculative, commercial imperatives. As Latham (2003: 1718) concludes, 'for all the talk about money and profit that goes with talk of urban renaissance, it is . . . clear that the cultural is not determined by economics but that the two are more symbiotically intertwined'. Commercial spaces of food and drink (I have not even begun to consider accommodation) do more than reduce hospitality to monetary exchange. They produce forms of hospitality and hospitableness between hosts and guests, and between guests and guests, that are not confined solely to the economic. They are an example of what Thrift (2005) calls 'lighter touch forms of sociality' – going for a coffee, grabbing lunch, a quick drink after work. Yet commercial acts and spaces have been exempt from consideration in current theorizations of hospitality. To my mind, this quarantining of theorizations of hospitality from the realities of commercial relations misses the vital work of urban life as a series of transactions productive of myriad socialities: those under-researched, mundane moments of togetherness that pattern everyday life (Morrill *et al.*, 2005). Moreover, while the commercial food (and drink) sector has

commonly been read as the stage for social differentiation and distinction (see Warde and Martens, 2000), it does not have to be that way (indeed, it is not always that way, as we have seen). Commensality is not always a disguise for competitions over taste and status; it can also be about social *identification*, the sharing not only of food and drink but of world-views and patterns of living. As Neal (2006) suggests, cities may have distinct 'consumptional identities', made visible for example by their eating places, that feed back into the cultures of cities – he differentiates US cities as 'Urbane' or 'McCulture' on the basis of the range and type of eateries they contain. If fed back into theorizations of hospitality and hospitableness, the equation of hospitality spaces and urban cultures could be productive in terms of 'unblocking' the debate around the ethics of hospitality. At the same time, as suggested earlier, hospitality is conceptually useful for thinking ways of relating and patterns of living in cities.

Dikeç (2002: 227) opens his paper with some lines by T.S. Eliot:

When the Stranger says: 'What is the meaning
of this city?
Do you huddle close together because you love
each other?'
What will you answer? 'We all dwell together
To make money from each other?' Or 'This is a
community?'
(Eliot, 1969, quoted in Dikeç, 2002: 227)

My answer would be 'Yes to all of the above'. What we are seeing here is, in Telfer's (2000: 49) words, a form of 'hybrid hospitality' – an acknowledgement of the need to move beyond simple models of what counts as, and motivates, hospitality in domestic and commercial domains. This 'hybridity' marks the transition from hospitality to hospitableness in these spaces. It is a recognition of the greater work taking place across the bar or at the table. It also marks a new hybrid site of inquiry bringing into productive contact the debates on the philosophy of hospitality with those in hospitality studies and in urban planning, policy and geography, to let their different viewpoints

rub together. A focus on hospitality as philosophy opens up urban life to new forms of analysis, while a focus on the practices of hospitality helps us rethink the ways we theorize hospitality and hospitableness.

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Jon Binnie, Phil Crang, Fernando Garcia, Joanne Hollows, Mark Jayne and James Kneale for comments on this paper or for conversations about its themes. Thanks also to audiences at Manchester Metropolitan University and the MeCCSA annual conference, Leeds, January 2006, for comments, questions and criticisms. And many thanks to Roger Lee and three anonymous referees for pushing me to make my ideas coherent.

Notes

1. This quote brings into focus the equation of hospitality, the gift and exchange: an equation central to Derrida but outside the scope of this paper; see Gibson (2003) for a very productive discussion of the relationships between these terms in Derrida.
2. We should note a sharp contrast between this neat definition and Derrida's declaration that we do not know what hospitality is yet; see Dikeç (2002).
3. While these key terms are used almost interchangeably, there are differences in the contexts of their use; the UK government, for example, seems particularly keen to talk about planning convivial cities at present, while much of the debate about the night-time economy and the 24-hour city has been framed around vitality (Montgomery, 1995; ODPM, 2004). And it is worth adding that these positively charged terms should be matched by their antonyms, too often neglected in boosterist accounts of urban revitalization (Thrift, 2005).
4. Of course, regeneration and gentrification are not wholly synonymous, though some critics have used the term 'commercial gentrification' to show that gentrifiers can be businesses as well as homeowners (Forsyth, 1997). In policy terms, too, there has been a move away from property-led regeneration towards greater emphasis on the need to

revitalize 'soft' infrastructure in neighbourhoods rather than just renovating the bricks and mortar. Thanks to Justin O'Connor for raising this point.

5. Not all of the work discussed in section III of this paper explicitly uses the term 'hospitality'. Nevertheless, I think it is possible to trace a common thread through these studies, marked by an implicit concern with issues of hospitality and hospitableness.
6. Thanks to Gavin Mellor for reminding me that some people have regeneration done to them, and are made into hosts, or at least hospitality workers, by (commercial) forces they may be all but powerless to resist.

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