THE PRODUCTION OF HOSPITABLE SPACE: COMMERCIAL PROPOSITIONS AND CONSUMER CO-CREATION IN A BAR OPERATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the processes through which a commercial bar is transformed into a hospitable space. Drawing on a study of a venue patronized by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual/transgender consumers, it considers how social and commercial forms of hospitality are mobilized. The paper argues that hospitable space has an ideological, normative and situational dimension. More specifically, it suggests the bar's operation is tied to a set of ideological conceptions, which become the potential basis of association and disassociation among consumers. It examines the forces and processes that shape who participates in the production and consumption of hospitality and how. Finally, it considers the situational, emergent nature of hospitality and the discontinuous production of hospitable space. Rather than focusing exclusively on host-guest or provider-customer relations, which dominates existing work on hospitality, the paper examines how consumers' perceptions, actions and interactions shape the production of hospitality. By doing so the paper offers an alternative approach to understanding queer spaces, bar operation as well as hospitality.

Keywords: Hospitality, Space, Bars, Lesbian, Gay, Queer,

INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been renewed interest among different academic communities in hospitality. Philosophers (Derrida, 2000, 2001; Friese, 2004), sociologists and cultural theorists (Germann-Molz & Gibson, 2007) and geographers (Barnett, 2005; Dikeç, 2002) have used hospitality to understand the politics of community and inclusion, particularly in discussions of global migration. Geographers such as Bell (2007a) have also begun to examine the relationship between hospitality, urban cultures and the transformation of urban space. At the same time, management researchers who traditionally treated hospitality as a series of economic and organizational practices have embraced social scientific conceptions of hospitality in their studies of its commercial provision (Lashley et al, 2007). There is increasing cross fertilization of ideas between different disciplines and scholars have examined how hospitality, as a particular type of social practice or discourse, may be entangled in the management of commercial operations (Di Domenico & Lynch, 2007; Lugosi, 2008). This paper builds on and advances this body of work by examining the intersection of social and commercial forms of hospitality and queer cultures. It contributes to our understanding of queer cultures and space by identifying the processes through which commercial venues become particular spaces of leisure consumption for those who seek to reject or resist hetero-normative conventions. Moreover, it contributes to our understanding of how social and commercial forms of hospitality interact by examining how commercial offerings or propositions become subjective consumer experiences of hospitality. The paper shifts the emphasis from examining host-guest transactions, which dominates existing conceptions of hospitality (Lashley et al, 2007), to simultaneously considering guest experiences and guest-guest transactions. More specifically, it examines the implications that consumer perceptions and

practices have on the production of commercial hospitality and on the transformation of a commercial venue into a hospitable space. This broader approach thus provides the theoretical and empirical basis for understanding how other spaces are rendered hospitable or inhospitable.

This paper draws on an ethnographic study of the "Freelands" – a bar located in the suburban town of Compton in the south of England.[1] The bar had a large gay and lesbian client base, but the operators did not target these consumer segments exclusively, and heterosexual men and women from the local neighbourhood also patronized the bar. The company operating the bar employed two managers, but provided minimal investment in furnishing, decoration, entertainment or advertisement. A small allowance was provided for the cleaners, but no extra funds were provided for bar staff. Any additional staff were paid from the cleaning allowance, the managers' wages or from not putting soft drink sales through the till. This low level of general investment was important in determining the bar's management and the consumers' consumption practices. The lack of economic capital needed to maintain this venture was substituted by the mobilization of social capital, and the operators relied on personal transactions of hospitality with customers to sustain the operation.

I began visiting the Freelands on a social basis, but I rapidly developed a sociological curiosity about the social and organizational dynamics of the bar. I eventually started working there as a barman and continued working for 27 months. In addition, I made social visits to this and other bars, clubs and cafes over a five-year period (see Lugosi, 2003, 2006, 2007a, 2008). Short notes were made during visits, sometimes discretely in quiet corners or toilets, but sometimes openly among patrons. These notes were elaborated on, usually on the same day or night of the visit. The insights gained through observations and informal conversations were complemented by semi-structured interviews with 26 informants from the Freelands (9 female and 17 male), 19 of whom were interviewed repeatedly. Interviews were generally conducted on a one-on-one basis, but 24 of the informants were also interviewed in groups of two and three. Initial interviews were mostly conducted in the bar and subsequent ones in other bars, restaurants and informants' homes. The formal and informal interviews with consumers, staff and managers provided opportunities to explore their experiences of this and other spaces, while also helping to identify operational issues.

This paper considers the relationship between discourses of community, inclusion and safety and the operation of the venue. It adopts a processual approach, which stresses the interaction of the abstract, material and symbolic in the production of space (Cuthill, 2007; Lugosi, 2007b). More specifically, it examines the processes that produce notions of hospitable space and it demonstrates the tensions and contradictions in these processes. It is argued that hospitable space has an ideological, normative and situational dimension. The paper suggests that the bar's operation is tied to a set of ideological conceptions, the myths of commonality, safety and play, which become the potential basis of association and disassociation among consumers. The discussion demonstrates how the bar's operators attempted to mobilise these myths in the construction of the hospitality proposition, and how this was received by patrons. The paper also examines the norms and normative processes that shaped the production and consumption of

hospitality. This illustrates how consumers experienced and co-created notions of hospitable space. Finally, the paper considers the situational nature of hospitality and the discontinuous production of hospitable space. It demonstrates how notions of hospitableness emerged and disappeared in different moments. It is important to note that three dimensions are not mutually exclusive: they often overlap and the actions of operators and consumer may simultaneously reflect the different dimensions. Nevertheless, attempting to distinguish between the three dimensions helps to illustrate how hospitality emerges in particular situations and how or why it may be reproduced over time.

HOSPITALITY

Brotherton's (1999, p.168) frequently cited definition states that hospitality is "a contemporaneous human exchange, which is voluntarily entered into, and designed to enhance the mutual well being of the parties concerned through the provision of accommodation, and/or food, and/or drink." This view of hospitality has been supplanted by arguments that it also involves complex relationships between providers, receivers and the locations in which they are experienced (Lashley et al, 2007; Di Domenico & Lynch, 2007; Lugosi, 2003, 2008). Beyond food, drink and accommodation, hospitality transactions involve the interpretation, articulation and negotiation of identities, power relationships, property relations and space. These alternative perspectives have destabilised narrow definitions of hospitality; emerging work has offered new opportunities to examine hospitality in a variety of contexts and to apply the concept to other intellectual fields; however, the literature also reveals the disparate nature of work on the subject.

Historically, hospitality management academics have been concerned with the provision of food, drink and shelter within a commercial transaction (Lashley et al, 2007). Such mundane forms of hospitality are sometimes offered through extensive provider-consumer interaction (Crang, 1994), but in commercial environments food and drink can also be provided with minimal or no interaction between staff and customers or between customers. Therefore, commercial provision may not involve actual hospitableness.

Management academia offers a utilitarian conception of hospitality, and this approach is increasingly being criticized for its failure to account for the social, cultural, political or emotional dimensions of such transactions (Lashley et al, 2007; Lugosi, 2008). Nevertheless, managerial concerns about the organization of the service environment and the mobilization of human resources are fundamental to understanding those commercial operations where food, drink or shelter is provided through provider-customer interaction. The challenge is to examine the social and cultural forces that shape how operational factors are created, maintained and transformed. It is therefore necessary to look beyond hospitality management, to social science, for a broader conception of its provision.

Anthropological studies offer an alternative perspective on hospitality and hospitable

behaviour (cf, Douglas, 1987). Selwyn (2000, p. 19), for example, argues that hospitality is a particular type of social practice in which "exchanges of goods and services, both material and symbolic" are used to establish new relationships or build existing ones. The provision of a physical space and sensory stimulus, the transactions of food and drink and performances of self have social functions in mediating relationships, reaffirming social structures while helping to construct host and guests' identities (Selwyn, 2000). This broader conception of hospitality helps to appreciate that offers of food, drink and shelter may be augmented by entertaining social intercourse and the provision of other forms of entertainment, for example music. It shifts the focus of inquiry beyond its mundane forms that are transacted in commercial venues for money. However, Selwyn (2000) is keen to maintain an analytical distinction between social forms of hospitality and that provided in commercial settings rather than using the former to understand the latter.

Selwyn's distinction between social and commercial hospitality is reflected in the existence of relatively few studies that examine in detail how these different forms interact (see Lashley et al (2007) and Germann-Molz and Gibson (2007) for discussions of work that addresses this imbalance). Numerous sociological, anthropological and geographical studies examine hospitality provision in commercial settings (Crang, 1994; Erickson, 2004). However, these have focused on service work i.e. on one type of hospitality rather than hospitality per se. Moreover, the provision of hospitality services is frequently conceptualized in terms of the gendered nature of service work, emotional labour or in terms of a general critique of organizational regimes. Olesen (1994) examines the notion of hospitality as social transaction when discussing its commercial form, although her work is also concerned with the identity performances of frontline workers. More important, her reference to commercial hospitality as "pseudo-hospitality" continues to separate its social forms from its provision in commercial settings. Such studies of hospitality are thus concerned with the service providers or provision, and with few exceptions (see e.g. Cuthill, 2007; Laurier et al, 2001; Lynch, 2005), other aspects of the experience, including the consumers' perspectives and the contexts of transactions are rarely considered. The latter issues have usually been examined in sociological studies (e.g. Cavan, 1966) that neglect to examine in any real detail the managerial aspects of commercial venues.

Philosophical studies conceptualize hospitality as ethical practice involving welcoming, inclusion, sheltering and reciprocity, which is entangled in the social politics of communities and nation states. Hospitality at this conceptual level may involve, but is not limited to, mundane transactions of food or drink (Derrida, 2000, 2001; Friese, 2004; Germann-Molz & Gibson, 2007). Dikeç (2002, p. 236) posits that hospitality is a gesture of engagement. In its ideal form, hospitality is a proposition of closer physical or social proximity and can therefore be thought of as an attempt to overcome or at least temper the effects of difference. Derrida (2000) maintains that such ideal, pure forms of hospitality are unachievable; consequently, we can never know what hospitality is and all we have are unfulfilled possibilities of hospitality. Participation or inclusion in hospitality is always conditional: within hospitality transactions hosts have duties to ensure the wellbeing of their guests, while guests have obligations to respect the rules of the host and to reciprocate; both are subjugated to the hospitality transaction and to the creation of a hospitable space. The offering and acceptance of hospitality specifies a threshold which is then crossed, and

in doing so it reinforces roles, identities and distinctions between host and guest. However, Sherringham and Daruwalla (2007) suggest that hospitality may also be considered a transgressive form of engagement where existing norms and statuses are temporarily abandoned. As I noted previously, those involved in transactions negotiate their roles alongside their dominance or subservience.

Such conceptions of hospitality have often been applied, in abstract terms, to issues of immigration and nation states rather than concrete practices in commercial environments (Derrida, 2000; Dikeç, 2002; Friese, 2004). Nevertheless, a philosophical conception of hospitality is useful in focusing attention on who may receive or participate in hospitality, the ethics and rules that govern the relationship between host and guest and the limits of hospitality. The challenge is to examine how these issues emerge through and are shaped by concrete practices of hospitality within its commercial provision and consumption.

The literature highlights that hospitality is a multi-layered phenomena. It also demonstrates that managerial, social scientific and philosophical approaches offer a partial but important understanding of its different forms and dimensions. To understand how its social and commercial manifestations become entangled, it is therefore necessary to consider critically the interaction between the different approaches to hospitality: the managerial or operational focus on how food and drink provision emerges as a set of propositions for consumers, the anthropological focus on the social and cultural functions of hospitality transactions and the philosophical concerns about the ethical or political principles that underpin and shape these transactions.

Despite the different focus of the three intellectual approaches, there is a common theme in their conceptions: the focus on host-guest or provider-customer transactions at the expense of guests' experience of hospitable spaces as well as guest-guest or customer-customer transactions. Writers have acknowledged the problematic nature of the notions of host and guest (Bell, 2007b; Lashley et al, 2007): roles may be reversed or blurred, and "hosting" and "guesting" may emerge through a variety of material, technological, discursive and performative processes. Within this paper I intend to move beyond simplistic notions of host and guest and consider how hospitable space is produced through a range of social and spatial processes. Some of these processes are driven by what may traditionally be conceived as hosting by "hosts" or providers of hospitality, but also implicated are a range of other forces, relationships and interactions – many of which have to be understood by considering the consumers or "guests" and their experiences of hospitable space. Within commercial contexts, interaction between hosts and guests or staff and customers may only form one part of the consumption experience. Cuthill's (2007) study of contemporary bars suggests that the "style crowd," a group of loosely affiliated individuals who share similar lifestyle and demographic profiles, helps to recreate the stylish image of venues through embodied performances of self. Lugosi (2007a; 2008) goes further and distinguishes consumers' participation in operational aspects from the performances of self that contribute to the image and ambience of the venue. These studies illustrate how consumers interact in multiple ways and play an active part in the creation of the service culture and the experience of hospitality. There is a need, however, to examine further how customers' relationships with the

hospitality offering i.e., the combination of such factors as the service environment, the music policy, staff and the operational practices shape their experiences of hospitable space.

HOSPITALITY AND QUEER SPACE

There is a strong historical relationship between lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual/transgender (LGBT) consumers and hospitality venues (David, 1997). Bars, restaurants, cafés and clubs offer opportunities for the expression of shared interest and shared identity (Wolfe, 1992), but they are also places of shelter, where patrons are shielded from surveillance and homophobic violence (Weightman, 1980). Lugosi (2007b) argues that for queer consumers, consumption within venues is tied to the pervading notions that a) patrons in such a hospitable space are, to some extent at least, a collective entity whose members have a shared interest in maintaining their social space by b) protecting those who invest capital of various sorts (social, economic, aesthetic etc.) in reproducing the values associated with that space, and c) allowing patrons to engage in activities that are subject to sanction outside that space. Lugosi (2007b) refers to these as the myths of commonality, safety and liberated play. To call them myths is not to imply that they are falsehoods or illusory sets of beliefs. Rather, they are tentative ideological conceptions – "a set of interconnected beliefs and their associated attitudes, shared and used by members of a group" (Fine & Sandstrom, 1993, p. 24). The production of such ideologies involves evaluative activities concerning what ought to be and they also have a behavioural component, insofar as they inform attitudes and actions (ibid). Lugosi (2007b) maintains that such myths are subject to contestation and only survive in so far as they are constantly perpetuated and consistently reproduced. As Moore (1975) suggests, ideologies are adjusted and regulated situationally among particular agencies and there is the potential for idiosyncrasy and indeterminacy in their reproduction. Research demonstrates that commercial hospitality venues are not equally hospitable to everyone; the myths of commonality, safety and play are reproduced, undermined and contested at various times (cf, Johnson & Samdahl, 2005; Skeggs, 1999). Previous studies, therefore, point to the need to examine the forces that regulate and disrupt the hospitableness of venues.

Sociological concerns about identity performance and inclusion/exclusion articulated through patronage unintentionally engage with specific dimensions of hospitality. Brown (2000) and Weightman's (1980) references to the absence of windows and unobtrusive frontage, or more recent observations about large windows in contemporary gay and lesbian venues that emphasize visibility point to the management of the servicescape in commercial hospitality (Binnie & Skeggs, 2004; Skeggs, 1999). Discussions of exclusionary tactics, including door policies (Beemyn, 1997; Reitzes & Diver, 1982) are effectively references to management practices. Furthermore, Kennedy and Davis' (1993) accounts of lesbians' experiences of being welcomed and made to feel safe in these venues are, fundamentally, gestures of hospitality by operators and patrons. However, these studies do not consider hospitality per se; nor do they attempt to examine the different dimensions of hospitality that were outlined in the previous section.

Kuntsman (2007) has at least partly challenged this trend. Her study of online discussions about an Israeli club catering for Russian speaking LGBT immigrants offers a number of interesting insights into immigrant queer spaces and hospitality. Commentary on the venue, the service and its patrons reveals the ongoing tension between inclusion and exclusion. This emerges

from conflicts between notions of queer community, the discourses of hospitality entangled in this venue and Russian/Soviet heritage. Kunstman's work reveals the tenuous nature of hospitality; it points to the ambivalent relationship that people share with venues attempting to perpetuate notions of queer community; and patrons' comments reveal how particular aspects of the commercial provision, such as the staffs' Russian appearance, poor quality service, drinks and facilities, become objects that mediate people's sense of exclusion. However, Kunstman does not set out to examine the management of the commercial venue and her analysis focuses on migrant rather than queer identities. Consequently there remains a need to consider how notions of hospitality may be entangled with discourses of queer community, identity and consumption. This paper examines how the social, political, ethical and commercial dimensions of hospitality may emerge in and interact with the operation of a queer space and consumer's experience of patronage. Focusing on hospitality reveals how venues may become inclusive, safe and ludic spaces for some consumer and why they are not for others.

DIMENSIONS OF HOSPITABLE SPACE

IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF HOSPITABLE SPACE

Within the Freelands the management and staff employed a series of environmental cues to perpetuate ideological conceptions about the venue. One of the first set of managers hung a rainbow flag – an overt display of queer visibility and community – outside the bar to communicate that it was a hospitable space for queer consumers, but it was moved inside the bar following complaints from neighbours. Subsequent managers employed a range of operational strategies to reinforce the notions that this was a safe space where consumers were shielded from surveillance, and also a space in which liberated play was possible. They installed frosted windows and blinds, which staff were instructed to lower every evening after six o'clock. Staff also had to turn on a vast array of flashing disco lights and the music policy was limited to three main varieties: contemporary popular music (mostly vocal dance music), popular "street soul" or modern Rhythm and Blues, or harder club-oriented tracks (some, purely instrumental, but most with some synthesized vocals). The music had to be played loudly to highlight the energetic and playful nature of the bar and of the consumers' experience.

Beyond the purposeful distinction between outside and inside and the manipulation of the service environment, the managers accentuated the hospitableness of the venue by drawing on a series of social and political issues that were considered important for queer consumers. For example, a World Aids Day event was held each year, which was accompanied by promotional drinks, charity collections and raffles. The managers also supported members of a local gay and lesbian charity by hosting "packing parties" every month during which customers helped make up packs containing condoms and lubricants in return for drink tokens. Though this did not guarantee social cohesion among consumers, by organizing such theme nights managers attempted to transform patronage into overt expressions of commonality and mutual interest.

Delineating the bar as a hospitable space also involved the reproduction of the idea that the Freelands facilitated hedonistic forms of consumption and that it was a space in which the

homophobia of the surrounding area could be challenged. The managers again used a series of overt environmental cues to direct the patrons' perceptions of the moral codes of space. For example, one of the male managers hung on each wall black and white pictures of naked male bodies. One picture was of a male hand holding his crotch and captioned: "safer sex." The same manager also redesigned an American pedestrian sign so instead of flashing "walk"/"don't walk" it read "wank"/"don't wank." These acts of display used the sexualized or aesthetically objectified body to create an image of a location where overt displays of sexual reference were encouraged and celebrated. However, they also reflect the male-centric nature of the hospitality proposition and the potential marginalization of females within discourses of hospitable space (cf, Johnson & Samdahl, 2005).

The operators assembled a broad set of signifiers to orchestrate the social order of the bar and to purposefully emphasize the difference between the inhospitableness of outside with the hospitableness of inside. These can be read as attempts to produce propositions of hospitality. The celebratory events, the rainbow flag, the blinds and frosted windows and the use of suggestive pictures and particular genres of music were used to reassert the myths of commonality, safety and play and render the venue a particular type of hospitable space. However, juxtaposing these signifiers attempted to blur the distinction between heterogonous groups of consumers, and for some, this bricolage was a problematic construction of queerness. For example, frustrations surrounding the flag emerged in an interview with two men in their early 20s:

> *Dean*: One thing I can't stand about this place is the flag thing going on. […] It bothers me! […] *Pride* [the name of the rainbow flag] was originally like we are proud and celebrating…

> Homosexuality (someone whispers).

> *Dean*: The imagery, 'pride', was originally the imagery of the flag; they need to change it because *Pride* doesn't mean the same thing it used to mean. It is an older thing now.

> *Nathan*: Change with the time; we are the new generation! […] There was the old school gay. We are the new school. The old school were very leather queeny, very fancy young queens walking around wearing strap-ons with leather and stuff. Back dark rooms, places like *Fist* and stuff.

Comments about the flag pointed to intergenerational fissures, and to the cosmopolitan discourses of contemporary queer consumption (see Binnie & Skeggs, 2004), which were absent at the Freelands. For some consumers, the proposition was exclusionary rather than inclusive and it highlighted both the fragility of notions of community and the inhospitable nature of venues using such operational strategies in targeting queer consumers.

Danni, a gay man in his early 20s, made clear his sense of exclusion when he said he hated "shit gay music." Danni was a dedicated follower of alternative rock bands such as Rage Against the Machine and was frustrated by the lack of gay venues catering for his tastes. He said if he wanted to go to gay places, he had to endure the same types of popular dance music played at the Freelands. For Danni, this was more than music; this was about the sort of sub-cultural assertions and assumptions associated with specific types of music. When recounting a visit to a popular gay bar in London he said "I walked in with long hair, jeans and a leather jacket and they told me that I was in the wrong pub. They asked if I was looking for the [rockers'] pub next door." He clearly *felt* his style, and the cultural genres he identified with, clashed with those perpetuated by the majority of popular gay venues. For Danni, music was an aural manifestation of these conflicting styles. It reflected the type of clientele whose patronage was encouraged and for whom the venue was hospitable, and those it excluded. Such animosity was also revealed during interviews with lesbian consumers:

Peter: What about music, what sort of music do they play in there?

Nicola: Cheesy pop.

Karen: They play the same music in every single pub I go to.

Peter: In every straight pub or gay pub?

Karen: Oh no not a straight pub. In a [straight] pub you'll listen to *Oasis*, *Texas*, a wide range…

Nicola: Good music.

Karen: You go into the Freelands, Whytes, Coast [other gay venues], it's all "dud dud," I can't stand it. It's like, why can't they make one night of old music.

Nicola: Proper music, with actual instruments and singers.

Karen: It is not gay enough [for other people]. We are being stereotyped by the music.

Nicola: It's like 11 year old music and gay music go hand in hand.

Management's construction of the proposition therefore revealed the inherent contradictions in attempting to reproduce the ideologies of hospitable space. Music in particular was a signifier of queer identity used to emphasize the playful aspects of the bar. But this and other attempts by the operators to conflate the myths of commonality and playful consumption were perceived by some consumers as the perpetuation of a narrow definition of queer community.

NORMATIVE DIMENSIONS OF HOSPITABLE SPACE

A second key dimension of hospitable space involves the normative processes and norms that help to create and sustain it. I use the notion of normative to stress the importance of centripetal forces that perpetuate particular roles, expectations and patterns of behaviour from patrons. Following Derrida (2000) and Lashley et al's (2007) arguments, discourses of hospitality can only experienced as a series of conditional offerings, rules, roles and obligations. The occupation of any commercial venue will have a normative dimension as customers conform to particular expectations of patronage. In the Freelands these normative forces were entangled with the myths of commonality, safety and play. These roles or patterns should not be thought of as being totally fixed or consistently reproduced in exactly the same way. As I argue later, patronage can also be disruptive or creative in generating alternative notions of hospitality and space. Nevertheless, their repeated emergence reinforces particular discourses about the hospitableness of space, both in the material or performed expressions themselves, and also as they reproduce cultural patterns and values for others.

Patronage, and by extension the commercially viability of the bar, was shaped by consumers' ability and willingness to mobilise economic and social capital. Patronage also involved particular identity performances, interaction rituals and mundane hospitality transactions, which reproduced group norms, inside-outside statuses alongside experiences of social proximity and distance (see Cavan, 1966; Cuthill, 2007; Lugosi, 2003 for further examples). Within the Freelands, as in other venues targeting LGBT consumers (Beemyn, 1997), performances of queer selves, which included but were not limited to public displays of affection and camp, were important in defining it as hospitable (see Lugosi, 2003, 2007a). However, the Freelands also highlighted how focusing on hospitality transactions, in its broadest sense, can provide insights into how the commercial venue may be transformed into a hospitable space. More specifically, the ongoing mobilization of economic capital and social capital was frequently discussed during interviews alongside expressions of duty:

> Basically we say we better go up the gay bar because we should be seen to be supporting it. Because if everyone just shut off it just wouldn't go on. It is nice to have it about, so you have the option that if you've had a bad day you can sit there as a couple and have a drink.
> (Elaine)

> I respect the fact that [the managers] opened the bar and kept it going for this long. It is important to come to show support.
> (James)

Some consumers even acknowledged that their obligation to a hospitable queer space outweighed their disdain towards the actual experience of patronage:

> I would still go there but I don't enjoy it. I know it sounds like I am really contradicting myself: I know I say I hate the place but I still go here. But it's Compton's only gay outlet. And I have to support that in a way. Even though I don't like the place, I have to. As Daniel [his boyfriend] would say "support the local [gay] economy." (Warren)

These comments highlight the limitations of managerial and social scientific approaches to hospitality that focus on food and drink transactions at the expense of its broader philosophical and ethical dimensions. The perpetuation of hospitable space required rule and role governed investment. Patronage in this context reveals an *asymmetric hospitality*, in which transactions and obligations are not between individuals but between individuals and an imagined community. Patrons have obligations to the groups in the bar, the imagined community that patronized the venue and to the bar as a hospitable space, which are fulfilled by their continued patronage and the mobilization of social and economic capital.

I am not arguing that all the customers demonstrated or were motivated by commitment to grand ideologies of queer space; indeed, patronage for most people was underpinned by the mundane rewards of hospitality transactions that accompany consumption in any venue i.e. access to alcohol, sociability etc. Moreover, many people expressed support for the Freelands in conversations, but patronized the bar very infrequently; therefore, their contributions to hospitable space were limited to perpetuating the myth of commonality in their speech acts. Nevertheless, patronage for many others involved more than physical presence and the mobilization of economic capital, which point to the broader imperatives of this space.

Consumer participation in commercial hospitality provision included collecting glasses, ushering people in from the garden during the evenings, cleaning ashtrays, opening and closing doors for people coming and leaving during after-hours drinks and serving drinks (see Lugosi, 2003; 2007a). Customers also acted as door staff during events and often policed the bar, informing managers of incidents of improper conduct among staff. Several helped to run the weekly quiz, on a number occasions customers helped decorate the bar prior to events and occasionally they put on transvestite shows during parties. A number of the regulars also accompanied and sometimes even chauffeured managers during shopping trips to local supermarkets. Small amounts of money were paid for some of these services, and most managers reciprocated with drinks, but much of this labour was unpaid.

Consumer participation in the commercial operation suggests that discourses of hospitable space elicited particular subjectivities and subjective experiences of the bar. The Freelands' operation can be read as interpellation (Althusser, 1984; Probyn, 2003) – a call to engagement which some consumers recognised and responded to through the provision and consumption of hospitality. By doing so they submitted to the imperatives of hospitable space and became, as Probyn (2003) argued, subjects of the ideologies it embodied. This is not to imply naivety or

mindless conformance on their part. Consumer participation was often linked to social and psychological rewards. Those willing to help run the bar were allowed into the back and upstairs areas, where they could store their coats and socialize with staff and customers; their misdemeanours frequently received lighter sanctions and they were automatically invited to after-hours drinks. As the following interview extract suggests, for many consumers, contributing to the venue's operation reflected their involvement in the social practices of its operators and patrons.

> I love it behind the bar. I absolutely love it. It's like I don't always have the money to come up to sit this side so if I'm that side of the bar I still get the atmosphere. I used to say to Keith "I'll do it for nothing" because I just love being at that side of the bar and if I haven't got the money I can still be there and see friends and have a good crack. (Joyce)

Finally, it is important to stress that commercial factors were part of the normative processes that shaped consumer co-creation. The operation's under-capitalisation increased staff-customer ratios, which potentially compromised both the service quality and the range of services available. This necessitated the development of relationships that disrupted traditional provider-customer divides. Playful, convivial interaction, inclusion in conversations, invitations to parties and lock-ins, and the exchange and consumption of drink and drugs were part of intimate, personal transactions of hospitality that entangled patronage with notions of loyalty and obligation (see Lugosi, 2003). This subsequently helped to transform patronage into consumer labour that compensated for the lack of investment.

SITUATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF HOSPITABLE SPACE
I have so far argued that the production of hospitable space was underpinned by a number of ideological conceptions – namely the myths of commonality, safety and liberated play. I have also maintained that these were supported by normative processes that were shaped by the imperatives of hospitable space and by norms which were perpetuated through patronage. In this final section, I demonstrate further how notions of hospitableness surrounding the venue materialized in some situations and disappeared in others, particularly through consumer practices and perceptions.

One example of a co-created expression of hospitable space was the house cocktails: the "Fifi" and "Grandma" specials, which were invented by some of customers and staff. Only knowledgeable staff and a few regulars knew the ingredients, the bar did not normally serve cocktails and they were not advertised. Neophytes were introduced to these drinks by existing patrons, and when these new customers returned they frequently bought these drinks for the people who accompanied them during subsequent visits. The house cocktails reflect Selwyn's (2000) argument that transactions of hospitality help to establish and reinforce social relations: the drinks point to a process of consumer socialization and the articulation of shared knowledge. More importantly, such activities also reflect the emergent nature of hospitable space. For example, one of the regular customers, Darren, used to bring acquaintances to the bar and ask for his "regular" when buying rounds of drinks. He used this to demonstrate his insider status and the unique consumer experiences offered by the Freelands. Consumption of the drinks became an active process of remembrance and reification of the myths of commonality. The drinks

reproduced the notions that the Freelands thrived because of the close-knit relationships between the staff and customers, and that it was a hospitable space that facilitated hedonistic forms of consumption. However, it is also important to stress that knowledge of this ritual only survived as long as patrons continued to enact them. After several of the regular customers who drank these cocktails stopped coming to the Freelands, requests for these drinks also stopped and this manifestation of hospitality disappeared.

The fragile and situational nature of hospitable space continually became apparent through consumers' occupation of the venue. For example:

> It was a really slow night and I was expecting to have an early night. […] Four women came in, all in their late 30s. They started drinking spirits and invited us to have a drink with them. […] They asked to change the music and we gave them a few of our CDs to look through. They asked us to play 80s music, especially high-energy songs like the Weather Girls' *It's Raining Men*. Joanne kept telling me how she loved gay places and how she had been going to gay clubs since she was 17. […] Darren was at the bar next to the women and started talking to Joanne when the subject of music came up. […] They all started dancing at the bar and two of the women climbed up the wooden pillar [with a small table attached] and started pole dancing. They carried on until one of them pulled the light off. Steve [the manager] didn't seem too bothered. […] Darren had got up and was dancing too. Even Ken [one of the more conservative customers] was dancing. […] I left just before 2am.

This diary extract highlights consumers' ability to transform the venue into a temporary play space and thus their ability to enact the myth of liberated play. Management contributed to these ludic moments by allowing these behaviours to take place, but such allowance only created opportunities. These were then exploited by consumers as they reified the myth that the bar was a social space in which established social conventions could be transgressed.

Consumers also delineated hospitable space through selective exclusion. For example, after-hours drinks were a regular occurrence and trusted customers were often charged with letting others know about "lock-ins." For a time, key customers were told to shepherd to one side of the bar all the people they wanted to stay inside after the official closing. One corner of the bar would suddenly fill up tightly with people while those not invited were left standing in the middle of the empty bar. In other situations, exclusion was specifically aimed at individuals, for example disruptive, inebriated customers, who challenged the social order of the bar. As Moran et al. (2001) argued, the production of queer space is tied to discourses of property, assertions of ownership and the establishment of boundaries. Moreover, hospitableness/inhospitableness or inclusion/exclusion is not only enacted at the thresholds of space; rather, exclusion and boundaries are performed between specific actors in different moments in their ongoing production of space. The sharp enactments of group boundaries and exclusion during lock-ins revealed the iniquitous nature of hospitable space and the limitations imposed on the bar's propositions. However, selective exclusion during other situations, when consumers defended *their* space from those who disrupted the social order, reasserted the myth of commonality and the discourses of propriety.

Selective exclusion, the collective defence of space and the incidents of playful consumption demonstrate how the myths of commonality, safety and liberated play were entangled in the venue's operation and in the consumers' experience of hospitableness. However, these were short-lived and ephemeral; notions of hospitable space were tentative and could be disrupted at anytime. This became acutely evident following a violent incident when one patron's family members assaulted two of the bar's regulars. The reactions to this incident reflected the fragility of the venue's hospitality and the volatility of the myths of commonality and safety that underpinned notions of hospitable space. For some informants, the incident signalled the absence of solidarity:

> You know there was that fight a couple of months ago? It proved that there is no sense of unity or togetherness. There were seven straight people there that wanted to cause a fight. As a gay community I think we should have stood up and said what the fuck do you think… [Pause]. Who the hell do you think you are? We didn't. We got all frightened and scuttled away. What we should have done is say "there's more of us, this is our pub!" It didn't happen. There were kids running out terrified. (Warren)

For others, this incident signalled the contrary and reflected a strong sense of community among patrons:

> When Mick, you know when Frank and his family started on him? And everyone was like "if you want us down there we will come down there!" Me and Anna was like "yeah, I'm there!" I think everyone sticks together. Whether it be a female getting their head kicked in or a male, everyone would just pile in. We all look after each other in here. I know if I were in trouble, there is quite a few people I could turn to in here. (Joyce)

The two assaulted men, Jamie and Mick, were apprehensive about going to the bar in case Frank or members of his family came in; so, as a gesture of friendship and solidarity, Joyce and her friend offered to accompany them during subsequent visits. Several of the regulars threatened the manager with a boycott if he allowed Frank or his relations to drink in the bar. As a result, the manager barred Frank and his family.

The myths of commonality were not coherent or consistent notions, although networks of support existed and certain individuals displayed visible emotional commitment towards each other. These fragmented and precarious myths of commonality thus emerged as patrons reasserted the hospitableness of space through their patronage. Their patronage signified their sense of shared interest and thus helped to perpetuate the myths of commonality and safety. The incident with Frank and his family demonstrated how lived experience could easily undermine the imagined qualities of the bar. Nevertheless, the social

and economic capital that patrons could mobilize was used to reassert the notion that the Freelands was a site for the articulation of communal sentiment. Such a violent attack galvanized a sense of mutuality, at least among a few of the core patrons, which in turn was realized in their visible and politicized consumption as they sought to reassert the myths surrounding the Freelands. Furthermore, the threats by certain key patrons to withhold their patronage and, consequently, the economic capital this brought with it, reinforced these myths of commonality and the notion that this was a hospitable space for queer consumers.

CONCLUSION

It has been argued in this paper that a commercial venue may be transformed into a hospitable space for queer consumers through a series of social and spatial practices. Within the Freelands, the notion of a hospitable space was tied, in part at least, to propositions of hospitality involving ludic consumption, discourses of inclusion, shared interest and safety which are dependent on ongoing patronage and visibility. These propositions linked this particular space to larger, more complex social, political and economic geographies. The bar emerged as a hospitable space in relation to other inhospitable (i.e. violent, hetero-normative) spaces; moreover, the Freelands was one landmark on a broader leisure landscape, and thus its operation was linked to other spaces that perpetuate similar offerings. Propositions of hospitality were reproduced partly through the management and organisation of the service operation. The bar's operators attempted to construct the commercial offering and shape customer perceptions of the venue. They displayed particular objects to communicate queer values, organized community-oriented events and used such organizational policies as after-hours drinking and dance-oriented music to create a hospitable space for its customers. However, the data suggests that these management initiatives attempted to blur boundaries between diverse groups of consumers, which actually excluded some consumers and negated the hospitableness of the venue. Consumers also co-created discourses of hospitality through patronage, representations of space, selective exclusion, but also through their involvement in the commercial operation. Moreover, notions of hospitableness and inhospitableness emerged as consumers subjectively experienced it physically or psychologically in its symbolic, material and emotional forms.

This paper also argued that the production of hospitable space can be conceived as having an ideological, normative and situational dimension. In this case the ideological dimension involved three frequently reproduced myths or ideological conceptions: commonality, safety and play, which became entangled in the commercial proposition and the consumers' experience of it. The normative dimension refers to the forces that draw consumers into the co-creation process. This involved a series of practices that help perpetuate the ideological conceptions of hospitable space and sustain the commercial operation in which these conceptions are mobilized. The situational dimension refers to the unstable nature of the proposition and perceptions of it. Moreover, highlighting the situational dimension demonstrates how notions of hospitality are constructed, reaffirmed and extinguished by consumers in different situations. In focusing on these three dimensions the paper attempted to collapse the distinction between the commercial, social and philosophical understandings of hospitality. The production and consumption of hospitable space can be viewed as attempts to manage the operation, orchestrate the consumer

experience, or position products or services within a marketplace; it can also be viewed as a series of social, cultural, political, ethical and symbolic actions. However, this paper has tried to understand how these different aspects of hospitable space can interact, and how different conceptual approaches be brought together to create a nuanced, multi-disciplinary and multi-dimensional understanding of hospitality.

The emergent themes developed in this paper contribute to several areas of academic debate. Firstly, identifying the social and cultural processes involved in the production of hospitality helps to develop alternative perspectives on its management in commercial settings. In particular, this paper helps to challenge existing managerial perspectives that have been criticized for assuming a narrow approach to the study of hospitality (Lashley et al, 2007; Lugosi, 2008). The management was able to mobilize a sense of loyalty, and commitment from the clientele played a significant role in the ongoing existence of the bar. This is not to argue that management could orchestrate fully consumer perceptions and behaviour. Nevertheless, numerous consumers displayed loyalty to the Freelands and this paper highlights the factors that shaped their commitment.

Secondly, the study highlights the application and limitations of sociological and anthropological approaches to hospitality that were exemplified by Selwyn (2000). Hospitality undoubtedly has social functions in creating and developing relationships between individuals. Nevertheless, rather than separating its social and commercial forms, the Freelands case demonstrates how the social aspects of hospitality transactions can affect the operation of the commercial venue in which it is produced and consumed. It is also evident that managerial attempts to produce particular discourses of hospitable space can shape the manifestations of hospitality among consumers. However, the Freelands case also demonstrates that rather than conceiving hospitality as a functional set of activities, purposively mobilized to build and develop relationships, hospitality is an emergent set of social practices and perceptions of the spaces in which they occur. For example, momentary displays of playful, transgressive consumption highlight the ability of staff and customers to articulate in particular situations the notion that the bar was a space where this was possible.

Thirdly, the paper demonstrates the need to extend philosophical approaches to hospitality beyond the abstract discussions of migration and nationhood offered by Derrida (2000), Friese (2004) and others. Within the Freelands the construction of the proposition and its perpetuation through patronage had an ethical and political dimension. The implications of patronage stretched beyond the consumption of food or drink: for some consumers, it became the enactment of solidarity. This highlights the ways in which guests or consumers may therefore have obligations, not just to the hosts/commercial providers, but to other guests/consumers and the imagined community to which they belong. Nevertheless, as noted above, it is important to remain critical of a functional view of hospitality and to remain sensitive towards its discontinuous and emergent nature.

The paper also demonstrates that the notion of hospitality is not only useful in thinking

about the welcoming of strangers; instead, hospitality becomes a broader concept with which to understand ongoing relationships between individuals in and through spaces. This also encourages us to shift the emphasis from the notions of threshold, arrival and reception to the complex productions of hospitable spaces, which helps to appreciate how inclusion and exclusion emerges at multiple points, and through a range of material, performative and representational processes.

Fourthly, following on the previous point, the paper offers an alternative perspective on queer consumers and bar cultures (cf, Beemyn, 1997; Moran et al, 2001). It has been argued here that hospitality can be a conceptual tool with which to interrogate the dynamics of commercial spaces catering for queer consumers. Examining how hospitality in its multiple forms is co-created offers important insights into how notions of invisibility/visibility, community, property, ownership and belonging emerge. Furthermore, focusing on the offer or denial of hospitality in its mundane, social and ethical forms helps to appreciate how acts of exclusion and boundary maintenance shape discourses of queer space. Considering the emergence of hospitality also helps to comprehend how queer spaces may be produced and experienced through various forms of ludic consumption and consumer participation (Lugosi, 2007a). Finally, examining commercial queer spaces through hospitality also brings into focus the managerial aspects of a venue and the processes through which the necessary but fragile discourses of community, safety and playful rejection of hetero-normative conventions may be mobilized in its operation. This illustrates how social and commercial forces interact to transform venues into inclusive spaces for some consumers while excluding others. Examining queer space through notions of hospitality thus helps to analyse the entanglement of a broad range of agencies and processes involved in their production. Moreover, such an analytical approach attempts to map the relationships between them rather than necessarily privileging any one.

Finally, the emerging themes of this paper point to the broadening horizon for the study of hospitality as well as to an emerging paradigm for examining the relationship between society and space. Following Bell (2007a), Derrida (2001) and Lashley et al. (2007), rather than viewing the study of hospitality as an end in itself, hospitality and hospitableness can be a lens through which to view cultures and their spaces. This paper has demonstrated what the production of hospitable space may involve and the various agencies and processes that can interact in its production. It has also been argued that interrogating the ideological and normative dimensions of hospitality, while recognizing its discontinuous, situational nature offers a way to understand how other places may be transformed into hospitable spaces. Such analysis may not be restricted to commercial spheres of hospitality provision e.g. bars, restaurants, clubs, cafes, hotels, but to a range of domestic, social, commercial and public locations that people inhabit for work, leisure or travel. Future research can offer nuanced, context sensitive perspectives on how other spaces become hospitable or inhospitable, or are experienced as such by those who occupy them. This can provide important insights into how notions of self/other, proximity/distance, freedom/constraint, work/play and inclusion/exclusion are developed, negotiated and articulated in other cultural contexts.

NOTES

1. The names of the people and places in the study are pseudonyms.

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