



Mundane welcome: Hospitality as life politics



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 20 November 2015

Revised 28 March 2017

Accepted 2 April 2017

Keywords:

Welcome

Sense

Habitus

Ontological search

Anchorage

Agency

ABSTRACT

This research explores the experience of mundane welcome and elaborates the emergent concept, 'hospitality life politics' (HLP), referring to hospitality practises invoked by the individual in order to negotiate the world on a day-to-day basis. Themes emerging from the ethnographic study are presented: sense of welcome; welcome habitus; ontological search for trust and security; welcome anchorages; the welcome assemblage; welcome as social oil; non-welcome; HLP as agency. Consideration is given to the theoretical implications of HLP, and the possibilities of hospitality in terms of creating healthy societies and its important role in advancing understandings of tourism.

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Introduction

The study of hospitality has long been associated with anthropology and what [Candea and Da Col \(2012:Siiv\)](#) refer to as 'classic anthropological wisdom', such as its associations with 'reciprocity and mediation of otherness'. Further examples relate to hospitality's association with hosts and guests-strangers, as well as ritual, civility, formality and courtesy which [Selwyn \(2000\)](#) advises take place in the context of 'moral frameworks' (19). Whilst a positive discourse surrounds hospitality in terms of its capacity to bring people together, other associations are more problematical. Thus it is also associated with 'ambiguity and potential danger' and subverting 'facile distinctions between disinterested and self-serving actions' ([Herzfeld, 2012:S210](#)). [Shyrock \(2012\)](#) locates hospitality as associated with both morality and politics/ethics. [Herzfeld \(2012\)](#) identifies hospitality as part of a larger moral economy and concerned with the 'framing of risk' (S215). [Candea and Da Col \(2012\)](#) draw attention to the under-theorisation of hospitality in anthropology and call for re-engagement in the topic against a background of significant interdisciplinary interest in the concept and practice in relation to social themes such as migration, postcoloniality, sovereignty and international law.

Kant highlights the importance of the planet's population necessarily interacting with one another in a hospitable fashion owing to being confined to a finite space ([Kant, 1996 \[1795\]](#)). Yet in tourism, there is a curious neglect of welcome given its associations with the idea of universal hospitality to enable global movement. Despite welcome being central to the tourist experience, as a focus of research it has been overlooked. Nevertheless, elements of welcome are pervasive in tourism scholarship. For example, [Molz \(2007\)](#) considers the importance of the body in tourism and draws attention to how bodies are adapted to 'fit' or 'pass' and how some bodies find it easier to travel than others on the basis of nationality, race, gender, sexuality, disability. [Shyrock \(2012\)](#) suggests it is the hospitality industry as well as government bodies through immigration controls and policies which assume the role of caring for the temporary foreign traveller outside of the domestic space. Tour-

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2017.04.001>

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ism is variously participant in ensuring legal and social boundaries leading to inclusion and exclusion, foundation stones of welcome, for example, through passport controls (McGuire & Canales, 2010) or tourist enclaves (Davis & Morais, 2004).

The critical turn in tourism with its aspirations to address issues such as social justice is arguably a concern with creating healthy, welcoming societies (Ateljevic, Morgan, & Pritchard, 2011). At a macro level consideration has been given to tourism's role in developing healthy societies primarily through economic and social empowerment means (Blake, Arbache, Sinclair, & Teles, 2008) but also through attention to tourism's engagement with, for example, obesity (Small & Harris, 2012) or age (Sedgley, Pritchard, & Morgan, 2011). Such studies concerned with issues of social inclusion and exclusion, focus upon factors which lead to marginalisation of individuals from mainstream society and explore the role of tourism in addressing them. Literature on the tourist experience deals less directly with experiences of welcome and non-welcome through exploration of "an individual's subjective evaluation and undergoing (i.e. affective, cognitive, and behavioural) of events related to his/her tourist activities" (Tung & Ritchie, 2011:1369) and through a concern with the emotional, mindful and spiritual impact of the tourist's experience (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). Similarly, studies exploring the tourist engagement with place and space variously touch upon the individual experience of welcome and non-welcome (Rakić & Chambers, 2012). Crouch, Aronsson, and Wahlström (2001) describes the tourist encounter as one that is 'imaginative, reflexive' (2001:253), a 'poetic encounter' (after De Certeau, 1984) (2001: 254) involving 'agency and subjectivity' (254) which leads to the tourist 'encountering her- or himself' (255).

There has been a tendency within the tourism field to only dwell within frameworks that cast tourism in contrast to everyday life (for example, Seliinniemi, 2003) rather than being, in many ways, continuous. Nevertheless, increasing attention in the tourism literature is being paid to the ordinary, the taken-for-granted. Rickly-Boyd and Metro-Roland (2010) highlight the importance of the prosaic, both everyday objects such as language, architecture and people, and background elements such as a stream, forest, wildlife, in influencing tourist experiences of place. Obrador-Pons (2009) signals the overlooking of the banal and reveals the significance of the sensation on the skin of, in his examples, sun or sand. Binnie, Holloway, Millington, and Young (2007: 516) suggest it is the banal and the routine which '...hold things together, they give us ontological security'. Edensor (2007:199) argues that much of the tourism experience – contradicting Crouch et al.'s (2001) imaginative, reflective tourist encounter – is based upon 'unreflexive practice and habit'. Through a focus upon mundane tourism the blurring with everyday life becomes near inseparable (McCabe, 2002). Significantly, McCabe (2002) points to how tourist experiences mirror broader issues in society. Likewise, Back (2015) observes how the mundane provides a portal to broader social issues.

Hannam, Sheller, and Urry (2006) distinguish between obligatory and voluntary forms of travel which give rise to different forms of hospitality (being welcome or not). The framing within mobilities gives rise to the home as a place of mooring assuming a particular significance. Molz and Gibson (2007) advise that mobility is usually implicit in hospitality and engage with the ethical implications of such mobilities, pointing to a relative neglect of the topic. Inspired by Kant (1996 [1795]), their concern is with cosmopolitan hospitality and the ethics of social relations: the ability to host, who is permitted to be a guest, how to host the Other, and how the host's self is defined. The major overarching theme arising in the literature of mobilities and ethics is how to co-exist with strangers on a day-to-day and ongoing basis (Bauman, 1995); the importance of this concern is due to the dramatic rise in international mobility. Simmel (1971) identifies the stranger on the basis of their mobility. Whilst Derrida (1999) has focused attention on the ethical issues arising from crossing the threshold into a home space, the ethical issues involved in crossing the threshold to leave the home space and engage with the outside world have received less attention. Bell (2009) suggests that applying a hospitality lens may be very beneficial to better understanding tourism. It is timely to adjust the tourism lens and focus upon a critical hospitality studies perspective of welcome.

The study of hospitality 'wherever hospitality exists, in whatever shape or form' has been propounded (Lashley, Lynch, & Morrison, 2007:188). In advocating such a focus, emphasis is paid to the interaction between hospitality and society (Lynch, Molz, McIntosh, Lugosi, & Lashley, 2011). There is a significant multi-disciplinary literature studying society through a hospitality perspective, much of it concentrating upon use of the hospitality as welcome metaphor to examine hospitality offered at a national or civic level of society, for example, to refugees (Gibson, 2003). Such studies reflect the analytical power of hospitality and reinforce the centrality of the ethic of hospitality in terms of its governance of human relations (Derrida, 2001). The identification of hospitality as found in domestic, commercial as well as social settings (Lashley, 2000) is indicative of hospitality as a mobile concept. Despite much effort to define and understand the nature of hospitality (Bell, 2012), hospitality is still poorly understood and its theoretical potential for making sense of the world underdeveloped and under-utilised (Lynch et al., 2011). The simple but immensely powerful metaphor of hospitality as welcome is underexplored from a hospitality studies perspective. In the context of hospitality management the idea of hospitality as welcome is arguably captured under the idea of the service encounter and welcoming of the customer/stranger (Bitner, Booms, & Tetreault, 1990). Here, a definition of the concept of hospitality is being understood that typically emphasizes hospitality as much concerned with a degree of welcome and hospitableness as the provision of food, beverage and accommodation.

The idea of 'welcome' commonly features in definitions and discussions of hospitality. Keywords associated with welcome (Harper Collins, 2000; Books.Visuwords.com, 2013) include: 'kindness', an act of consideration to an Other; 'Welcoming strangers', a reaching out to the Other; 'Acceptance', tolerance but also a sense of embracing difference; 'Invite', a communication with the Other, a request to join; 'Hospitable', qualities of the person who, or thing which, is welcoming and also a feeling of the welcome; 'Received with pleasure', welcome as something embraced, internalised by the individual evoking an emotional response; 'Inhospitable', something or someone unfriendly, unfavourable and therefore a reinforcement of the sense of the Other being a stranger, an emphasis upon their exclusion; 'Unkind', lack of consideration for the Other

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