

Experiencing hospitality

by *Rowson, B. and Lashley, C.*

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Bill Rowson and Conrad Lashley are two authoritative voices who do not need a further presentation in the fields of hospitality. In this occasion, they present an edited book, which entitles experiencing hospitality. This editorial project, recently released by the leading publisher Nova Science, gathers 12 chapters oriented to build a bridge between theory and practice. Of course, the term hospitality not only denotes different significations – such as the dichotomy between commercial or non-commercial typologies – but also the figure of the hotel embodies ancient anthropological rites where hospitality occupies a central position, while it represents a unit for profits (for the hotel-owner). Hence, the book is a useful toolkit for social scientists and practitioners in the hospitality industry. In the introductory chapter, precisely, Conrad Lashley interrogates furtherly on the needs of narrowing the discrepancies and differences between the hospitality management tradition and the social sciences. While the former signals to develop the infrastructure to provide commercial services, the latter refers to the study of hospitality as a social institution. Though these traditions are not mutually exclusive they share contrasting conceptions of what hospitality means. In this respect, Lashley suggests that hospitality should be approached from three perspectives: the cultural social domain, commercial-industrial domain and private-domestic domain. The convergence of the three domains results in what Lashley calls “the hospitality experience”. In the cultural domain, hospitality cultivates the host-guest relations and the human reciprocity ignited by hospitableness. The domestic domain marks the access of guests as entrants to private and domestic space. As he puts it, “the tension between private and public space is at its most intense when a domestic dwelling is also a commercial space sold to strangers” (p. 7). Finally, the commercial domain is based on the provision with food, accommodation and lodge which is exchanged to a rate. Commercial hospitality is offered to those who can pay for it. These represent the services we find in hotels or restaurants. These spaces are characterized by higher levels of efficiency, calculability and control than other forms of hospitalities. Hospitality should not be limited to the rites of giving-while-receiving ethnographers have documented in a non-western culture. Commercial hospitality seems to be standardized elements of hospitableness in a capitalist society. Having said this, the tourism industry would gain much whether the anthropological theories about hospitality are incorporated.

The second chapter, which is authored by Roy C. Wood, explores the dichotomies of consumption in the fields of hospitality from a Marxist viewpoint. Echoing George Ritzer’s notion of McDonalidization, Wood toys with the belief that the radical hospitality which



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postulated the needs of giving shelter to anyone who calls for it, sets the pace to a new capitalist version where money occupies a central position in the human relations. This suggests that the purity of tribal hospitality is finally corrupted by the rise of industrialization (such a theory was conceived as the hospitality turn). Wood eloquently argues that Marxists believe that history denotes an inevitable class struggle, which determines the evolution of economic history. In the capitalist society, there is a gap between exploiters (capital owners) and exploited (the proletariat).

The third chapter – in the hands of Tom Selwyn – discusses the intersection of hostility in the rites of hospitality confronting the seminal book “In Search of Hospitality” (Lashley and Morrison, 2000). The chapter analyses three relating study-cases to understand the social nature of hospitality. These events are doubtless the fire that shocked London on June 2017 (Grenfell tower), followed by the deportation of Caribbean affiliation (known as Windrush Scandal and the well-famous Brexit. For some reason, as Selwyn infers, the UK faces by a climate of hospitality against the foreigner as never before. George Ritzer, in the fourth chapter, introduces the idea of McDonaldization to denote the triumph of efficiency, as a mainstream cultural value, over other more genuine forms of hospitality. In fact, as Ritzer observes, the urgency to impose standardised system centred on efficiency and control is destroying the real hospitality which connotes a more fluid host-guest interaction. This invariably led towards a much deeper alienation where the customer experiences “inhospitable hospitality”. Of course, emotions play a leading role in the rite of hospitality. In the fifth and sixth chapters, Prokopis Christou and Aspasia Smillidou and Christou will provide a robust conceptual framework to understand why emotions should be understood as predictors of human behaviour. However, far from being easily predicted, emotions display a net of complex situations and nets which are very hard to decode – for the fieldworkers. In fact, the chapter orients to discuss to what extent behaviour can be adapted to positive emotions in contexts of hospitality.

As the previous argument is given, Bill Browson – in the seventh chapter – acknowledges that the conditions of liberality and freedom the industry of hospitality offers, sometimes open the doors to the climate of extreme instability. A climate of psychological distress, certainly punctuated by the so-called gig economy, employers often go through insecure conditions of recruitment and work. The problem of alcohol consumption and abuse is treated in the eighth chapter by Jill Poulston. The chapter describes how the quest of pleasure is experienced by the server and the served in view of the fact it is the touchstone of hospitality. Poulston starts from the premise that hospitality does not apply beyond pleasure. She bases her analysis in the study of alcohol consumption in colonial New Zealand. The subordinated role of hosts in the commercial hospitality, as well as the conflict between staff-members, is a common theme in the 9th (Tjeerd Zandberg), 10th (Verena Hopf, Laura Velten and Bill Rowson) and 11th chapters (Klaes Eringa). While Zandberg fleshes out an interesting model that explains the decline of upper management in hotel organizations oriented to achieve a more personal relationship with the customer, Hopf, Velten and Rowson emphasize on the needs of adopting artificial intelligence and robots in the hospitality industry. Even if the future of AI and robots remains uncertain no less true is that its use facilitates the processes of self-checking or check out located in hotel terminals. Klaes Eringa thinks on the possibilities to re-frame hotels as hospitable working spaces for the staff. Last but not least, Radu Mihailescu explores the challenges and opportunities of wine tourism in the years to come. The segment of wine tourism was exponentially experienced a notable growth over the recent years. It not only contributed to the local economies but also boosted the domestic development – above all in the rural regions. Such an expansion has created unseen asymmetries which need to be closely studied.

After further discussion, the present book – at least for this reviewer – exhibits a titanic effort to decode the complexity of hospitality while laying the foundations towards an all-encompassing definition of the term. To a closer look, editors and invited authors do not agree with the classic distinction between commercial and non-commercial hospitality, situating this book as a fresh and innovative piece of hot debate highly recommended by ethnographers, anthropologists, social scientists and policymakers. Hence Rowson and Lashley offer a high-quality editorial product which surely will stand the test of time.

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Reference

Lashley, C. and Morrison, A. (2000), *In Search of Hospitality: theoretical Perspectives and Debates*, Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford.

About the author

Maximiliano Emanuel Korstanje is editor in chief of *International Journal of Safety and Security in Tourism (UP Argentina)* and Editor in Chief Emeritus of *International Journal of Cyber Warfare and Terrorism (IGI-Global US)*. Besides being Senior Researchers in the Department of Economics at University of Palermo, Argentina, he is a global affiliate of Tourism Crisis Management Institute (University of Florida US), Centre for Ethnicity and Racism Studies (University of Leeds), The Forge (University of Lancaster and University of Leeds UK) and The International Society for Philosopher, hosted in Sheffield UK. Now he co-edits almost 10 specialized journals and takes part of almost 30 journals associated to themes as human rights, mobility, tourism and terrorism. Korstanje was nominated to 5 honorary doctorates for his contribution in the study of the effects of terrorism in tourism. In 2015 he was awarded as Visiting Research Fellow at School of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Leeds, UK and the University of La Habana Cuba. In 2017 is elected as Foreign Faculty Member of AMIT, Mexican Academy in the study of Tourism, which is the most prominent institutions dedicated to tourism research in Mexico. He had a vast experience in editorial projects working as advisory member of Elsevier, Routledge, Springer, IGI global and Cambridge Scholar publishing. Korstanje had visited and given seminars in many important universities worldwide. He has also recently been selected to take part of the 2018 Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award, a great distinction given by Marquis Who's Who in the world.